

# **WHO ARE 'THE PEOPLE' ?**

## *A Challenge to Politicians*

By COLM BROGAN

At the present time there is an extraordinary clamour of voices claiming to interpret the will and the wishes of the People. But the People is a large and vague abstraction. Who are they ? It is the author's contention that the People is a stage army, composed of journalists, public speakers and other politically minded members of the clerkly or educated class. They are persons who make their living and find their vocation in the formation of public opinion and in the bureaucracy ; they are dangerously removed from the hazards and realities of ordinary life.

Professing to be exceedingly modern, they are, in fact, moved by sentimental memories of political struggles long done with, their opinions are governed by unrecognised emotional urges, and their principles are inconsistent, deriving from the irreconcilable social ideals of the French Revolution and Marxian economic theory.

They believe that a general intellectual acceptance of their own social notions will lead at once to a nearly perfect state of society. They think that the conduct of great affairs should and could be controlled by smart journalism.

In any case they speak for a small minority of those who do the most essential and constructive work of the world. They are pamphleteers, broadcasters, debaters and journalists. They are in Parliament, misrepresenting all parties. They are controllers of crank societies and organisers of endless protests and petitions. They are self-appointed spokesmen for all of us, but they are not The People.

E 2526



**WHO ARE 'THE PEOPLE' ?**





# **WHO ARE 'THE PEOPLE' ?**

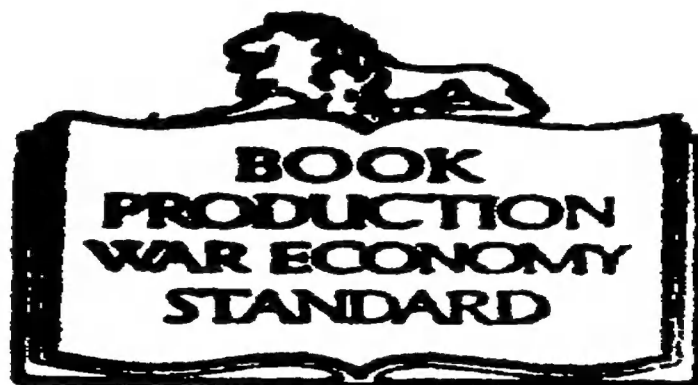
**SOME THOUGHTS ON OUR  
PRESENT MALCONTENT**

**BY  
COLM BROGAN**



**LONDON  
HOLLIS AND CARTER  
1944**

**FIRST PUBLISHED 1943**  
**REPRINTED DECEMBER, 1943**  
**REPRINTED MAY, 1944**



**THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COM-  
PLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE  
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS**

**MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
FOR  
MOLLIS AND CARTER, LTD**

# **CONTENTS**

<b>CHAPTER</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
<b>I.</b>	<b>THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE . . . . .</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>'NO SUPERIOR' . . . . .</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>THE END OF THE RAINBOW . . . . .</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>POST MORTEM . . . . .</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>THE RED DAWN . . . . .</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>LIBERTY . . . . .</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>EQUALITY . . . . .</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>FRATERNITY . . . . .</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>THE MONKEY'S PAW . . . . .</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b>QUISLING . . . . .</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>XI.</b>	<b>FAITH . . . . .</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>XII.</b>	<b>HOPE . . . . .</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>XIII.</b>	<b>CHARITY . . . . .</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>XIV.</b>	<b>JUSTICE . . . . .</b>	<b>150</b>

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

---

**T**HIS is a People's War. That has been stated with great earnestness by such a variety of public men that we may be tempted to believe that it means nothing at all. But it does mean something; indeed, a number of things. When Mr. Churchill used the phrase he meant, presumably, that this was a war which persons of all classes would find it very uncomfortable to lose. But Mr. H. J. Laski means something else. He means it is a war which gives an opportunity to all political parties to sacrifice their sectional interests in favour of Socialism. Mr. Priestley means it is a war for individual liberty, collective ownership and the abolition of all distinctions and privileges which are beyond his reach. For the Communist Party, a People's War is the same thing as a People's Peace—the subordination of British foreign policy to the imagined interests of Russia.<sup>1</sup>

But who are The People? There is more muddled talk on this point than is really tolerable in a country which spends large sums on education. Admittedly, the education is bad, and will be worse; but it is a miracle of human perversity that millions should learn to write without learning to read.

Progressive 'intellectuals,' journalists and political leaders speak for The People, pleading their cause against the arrogant stupidity of the ruling classes. How the rulers manage to survive the fervour of the attack and the consequences of their own incompetence must be a mystery to every student of progressive literature. The rulers have almost every fault that can be ascribed to humanity, but, somehow, they hang on; they keep their powers and authority. Obviously, they know something. What they know is hard to discover and is certainly unfair, but it is technically important. Twice the Labour Party has formed a Government, and twice it has fallen out of the seat of power as if it was a hammock. There is some trick about the business of keeping in which Labour has not quite grasped, and, indeed, may never grasp. For Labour is not The People. In many respects, Labour positively misrepresents The People. Labour

<sup>1</sup> Since the demise of the Comintern, the subordination is not less, but the imagination may be more exercised.

is narrow, given to nepotism, respectful of long service, timid, unimaginative, slow, and much in need of the advice and direction of the best contributors to *Picture Post* and the *New Statesman*.

The Unions are even narrower than the Labour Party. Union officials have lost all sight of the vision splendid in sordid preoccupation with hours and wages, and the rank and file are only fitfully conscious of their part in the great democratic struggle. They are easily stampeded by patriotism or imagined sectional interests. The black-coated workers are most obviously not The People. Indeed, they are The People's worst enemy and the despair of all enlightened political leaders. Not even the Communist Party can claim to be The People. With its newly inflated membership of fifty thousand or so, it may call itself the toiling masses, but it is hardly large enough to stand for the unvanquishable numbers of the Common Man. The Party's willingness to accept outside support may indicate knowledge of this deficiency in mere quantity; but, even with the Dean of Canterbury and Mr. Pritt added, it is still a minority in Church and State.

Who are The People, then? The political and economic organizations of the working classes do not represent the great entity. The more shapeless mass of the middle-classes does not fit in at all with the conception. The upper classes are the foe. 'When I mention religion,' said Mr. Thwackum, 'I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion, and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England.' The definition was illiberal, but at least it was clear. The notion of The People is no more generous, but it is deplorably vague. Perhaps the best approach is through the popularly accepted leaders of the progressive and right-thinking public. Where they lead, The People will follow.

These leaders are not united in principle and belief; but yet they are, in some sense, united. They are divided by deep gulfs in matters of the first importance; but they attach small importance to the gulfs. If the progressive Liberal attaches any importance to his Liberalism, he should look on Communism with unconcealed horror; but he does nothing of the kind. He is decidedly friendly in his attitude towards Communism, which he tries to consider as merely a rowdy kind of Liberalism, embarrassing at times, but emphatically on the right side of the line and improving in manners every day. There is a considerable overlapping between his vocabulary of clichés and



the Communist's and that gives him comfort to affirm that he has no enemies to the Left, and to forget that the Communist has no friends to the Right.

Mr. J. B. Priestley is deeply concerned for the protection of individual liberty and idiosyncrasy, and sincerely opposed to the development of the Mass Mind. Occasionally he takes time off from belabouring the Fascists for their inhuman conception of life to admit sorrowfully that the Communists are guilty of precisely the same crime against natural right and reason. But that consideration did not prevent him from writing an enthusiastic eulogy of the U.S.S.R. in an introduction to the famous Draft Constitution. Mr. H. G. Wells has also been known to criticize the Soviet, but on very different grounds. Mr. Priestley is a democrat; Mr. Wells is not. Mr. Priestley is not a doctrinaire Socialist; Mr. Wells is. Mr. Priestley exalts the common man; Mr. Wells despises him. Yet they are popularly and rightly regarded as being on the same side. They are hopelessly opposed in what would seem to be the very depths of their judgement of what the good life is and may be; but they are both 'progressive.' What they share is more important to them than all their fundamental disagreements, and what they share is social resentment. The landed gentry and the public schoolboy, the claims of heredity, or of an environment not their own, infuriate them beyond reason and measure. It is not the red flag that unites them, but the red rag.

Psychological unity of sentiment was very remarkably evident in the flood of books by foreign correspondents which edified and educated us in the years between wars. The correspondents betrayed a very wide range of talent, some being highly gifted and others poor indeed; but they were much of a muchness in their approach; they didn't know much about Europe, but they knew what they liked. 'Lend me your Rupert Brooke,' said a legendary typist, 'and you can have my Godfrey Winn.' Lend me your Vincent Sheean, and you can have my John Gunther. In fact, you can have both.

It was a queer but appropriate fact that many of the most popular commentators on European affairs were Americans. Not knowing, or at least not comprehending, anything of the history which is a subtle mixture in the living blood of Europe, they called themselves reporters. Too often reporters are persons who describe what is going on without knowing what is happen-

ing. It is characteristic of the rootlessness of the progressive mind that to be an American was admitted to be an advantage in the interpretation of Europe. Unlike Europeans, caught in the toils of their own environment and tradition, Americans had no inherited bigotries. They did not take political principles for granted, but merely held them, impartially, to be self-evident. Mr. Vincent Sheean has told us very frankly that he came to Europe knowing nothing whatever about anything at all. It was a bad start for a political philosopher, and it is not at all likely that what he has since picked up between trains is a very substantial or complete equipment.

In fact, nearly all the Left-Wing correspondents should have got the sack the day after the Saar plebiscite, for the result showed that they didn't know what they were talking about. But they didn't get the sack. They went boisterously on, from the Saar to Geneva, to Munich, to Godesberg, 'following darkness like a dream,' divided deeply in principle, but united by a freemasonry not merely of their trade but of a common emotionalism.

Emotion is also the real bond between the politically-minded. Really progressive politicians regard party differences with bored disdain, and the limitations of the Labour Party fill them with weary pity. They will gladly co-operate with the bright young spirits of the Conservative and Liberal Parties and with the flexible contemporary minds of the 1941 group. They don't care what party you belong to so long as you are a Socialist. Needless to say, this wide tolerance is not shared by the officials of the Labour Party. Indeed, Transport House is a positive stronghold of obscurantism, a steam roller holding the crown of the road and selfishly holding back the surging traffic of the new world. The obstruction is natural enough. The officials see influence and authority slipping away from themselves who have 'borne the burden and the heat of the day,' i.e., who have made careers for themselves out of Socialism, and going to undeserving others. They are annoyed at the interfering activities of Mr. W. J. Brown, the Mirabeau of Civil Service workers. They are not delighted at the prominence of Sir Stafford Cripps. It was bad enough to see the stone that the builders rejected become something like the headstone of the corner, but it was worse to see how small the public interest was in the building and to know that any day Sir Stafford might remove himself and become the headstone of another corner.



Labour leaders may have a very genuine passion for the New Jerusalem, but they will certainly be very sour and critical if the construction contract goes to another firm. There is nothing to surprise us in that, for people are never broad-minded about their own jobs. But official narrowness is confined to officials. It has no support from the mass of ordinary voters and readers who have no vested interest in party programmes and prestige. The great reading public of Gunther and Wells, the admirers of Professors Joad and Laski, the fans of the *New Statesman*, the crusading multitudes of *Picture Post* are one in spirit, and their spirit is not one of strict loyalty to any institution. They are not, even, in the majority, working class.

Superficially, it is a very complacent spirit. '*Les gens du Droit sont mauvais gens*,' said Anatole France. It is not to be supposed that he meant that statement to be taken with literal seriousness, but he did mean something, and he spoke for a multitude. Educated people of the Left mostly take it for granted that anyone who can think honestly and capably must think like themselves. If you stray into progressive company and they notice that you speak grammatical English and can count up to ten in a foreign language and seem to be free from obvious bourgeois prejudice, they will assume that you are one of their own.

To be one of them, to share their views implies a remarkable job lot of opinions. The true progressive (if he is not a Communist) deeply admires the *New Statesman*, and regards the Left Book Club as an experiment noble in purpose. He abominates all censorship (except in Russia), and believes that science, art and general wisdom can only flourish in an atmosphere of complete freedom of expression (except in Russia), and that politics must be divorced from the law (except in Russia). He believes that monarchy is at best a harmless joke, and that authoritarian (non-Communist) government is a blasphemy against humanity. He believes that birth control, euthanasia and abortion are great helps towards a more abundant life. He believes that Youth is a stage of exceeding sagacity and unselfishness, which is generally done down by unscrupulous Age. He believes that public schools produce a monotonous and offensive uniformity of type, whereas secondary schools produce a suffocating luxuriance of those richly human civil servants who people the Ministry of Labour and the Inland Revenue Department with an uproarious diversity of character and behaviour.

These are only a few of the general principles which are taken for granted ; and particular judgements are equally numerous and remarkable. It is accepted that the blame for our unarmed state must lie heavily on the shoulders of Earl Baldwin, who did not warn us of our dangerous state, and not at all on the shoulders of those who would have howled him down if he had. A large section of our ruling class are 'only too ready' to do a deal with Hitler, even now, and are morally responsible for the deal that Russia did conclude with Germany in 1939. The magnificent tenacity of the Russian Army is a clinching proof of the splendours of Soviet rule, while the magnificent tenacity of the German Army is sad evidence of the debasing effect of Nazi education on credulous youth. France capitulated because a number of bad old men who wore hooded cloaks wanted to preserve their investments and so sold the pass to Hitler, betraying the honest proletariat which was so anti-Nazi that it had clamoured for a strong stand right up to the outbreak of war. Our own army would have been much better prepared if it had been thoroughly democratized by conscientious objectors, and men who had instructed the public in contempt for the profession of arms.

It is unnecessary to continue with a familiar catalogue of the accepted small talk of progressive conversation. The outline given may seem somewhat bold and free, but it is substantially correct though not all the commonly accepted opinions are held to be absolutely of the dogma. You may disagree safely enough on one point, and, perhaps, on two. For example, it is now held to be at least a tenable thesis that Mr. Hore ('Notre Gamelin') Belisha was not perhaps the modern Carnot that at one time he seemed to be. It is also admitted that Captain Liddell Hart was perhaps not altogether right in everything he said and that his most eager disciples were catastrophically wrong. But it is not wise to differ in more than one or two details. If you go beyond that allowance, eyebrows are cocked and a wary look comes into the progressive eye. It is not wise to remind progressives of the picture of the last war that was completely accepted by them almost up to the time of Munich. It was a picture of gallant and chivalrous Youth being sent to slaughter at the instigation of elderly and extremely savage Conservative clubmen ; their thin chances of escape being destroyed by the prodigal stupidity of conceited and callous commanders who had mis-

understood Clausewitz and had never even tried to read Siegfried Sassoon. The worst of the elderly clubmen were the diplomats, the 'old men in carpet slippers' who hid themselves till the Armistice and then crept out of their holes to meet in Conferences of ghoulis cordiality and plan the technical occasions for the next holocaust.

Such memories are not comfortable to recall, for it is unhappily very easy to make a plausible case for the argument that the present war was brought about, not by senile and corrupt Age, but by idealistic and clear-eyed Youth, not by old and heartless men in carpet slippers, but by ignorant and loud-mouthed young humbugs in flannels and plus-fours. It is true beyond dispute that the clamour for reckless and bloody attack does not now come from old men in clubs, but from young men in reserved occupations. That cannot be denied, but it can easily be forgotten. The old sentimentalities may have become farcical, but they are still attractive. Only a few months ago it was possible for a Free German female to tell an International Youth Rally that one thing Hitler had failed to do was capture German youth. This majestic imbecility makes one pause. It suggests that Mr. Gollancz picked the wrong dilemma when he asked: 'Shall our children live or die?' He should have asked: 'Shall our children think or not?'

What progressives most dislike in such arguments and reminders is the inevitable suggestion that their attitude is unrealistic and sentimental; for they are innocently proud of their clear-headed objectivity. They like an opponent to wave the flag or to speak out stoutly for his old school. It is very pleasant to be kind and understanding to a poor fellow who speaks from the heart and not the head, and they feel it is the decent duty of the reactionary to adopt a sentimental and obsolete opinion and defend it in a bluff and embarrassed manner. But arguments of an opposite tendency and spirit are felt to be unfair.

If you persist in using unfair tactics it becomes necessary to find some local rule under which you may be comfortably disqualified. Obviously, there must be something in your heredity or environment which causes the perversity of your opinions. Did your father make money out of house property? Do you make money, yourself, out of reaction? Are you married to a woman of social ambitions? Are you, in spite of all appearances,



a public schoolboy? Are you merely trying to be funny? Perhaps you are a Catholic.

Once your particular inhibition is discovered, the talk can go happily on. You may be good company, but obviously you can't think, being a Catholic who has his thinking done for him, or a public schoolboy imprisoned in the prejudices of the class he was born into, or a Council schoolboy, aping the prejudices of the class he is climbing into.

Once your deficiency is known there is no need to listen to your cheap cynicisms and niggling objections; the great truths of life are beyond you. Progressives, at least the more self-satisfied of them, are honestly unable to admit that contrary opinions can possibly be based on anything better than some species of psychological damage, as objective and as clearly traceable as the results of a fall from a pram. It is a long time since Mr. H. G. Wells, with one of his frequent flashes of feminine shrewdness, said that Socialists thought they had a corner in ideas. But Mr. Wells himself, if he does not think he has a corner in ideas, at least believes he has an option on most of them. In his autobiography he draws a picture of himself as a young man attending a service in a Catholic cathedral and listening to a sermon. Here am I, he thought, young, poor, not educated in the grand manner, with no influence and no particular prospects, and I feel called to put my partially trained mind against all the economic power, the social prestige, the learning and the crushing weight of tradition and inherited authority which are represented in all I see around me. What, he asked, did he have on his own side? Merely a handful of untidy, hard-thinking people like himself, with hardly a handgrip on, let alone a foothold, in society. The prospect for his ideas looked almost hopeless.

However, he cheered up and took a brighter view of the future than appearances seemed, at first sight, to warrant. The opposition might be infinitely more powerful, more numerous and more self-assured, but there was one thing he could say for himself—only one; but it was enough. He was right and they were wrong. (Characteristically, and quite in line with my argument, he refused to admit that the preacher could really believe what he preached. At the most, he would concede that the man had the will to believe.)

Even now, when he is famous in many lands and when men of his mind are taking their ease on the episcopal bench

(Anglican), Mr. Wells still sees himself as lost among his enemies and struggling irascibly but with poor success to get a word in edgeways; and he is still unable to understand how independent and capable men are able to disagree with him on essentials.

That astonishment may have been sustained in Mr. Wells by a lifetime of controversy. He has said the same things so many times that it must seem almost unendurable to have to say them again. But it is common among progressives who have led more sheltered lives, and who do not share his openly expressed contempt for majority rule. Progressives have their frequent moments when they positively delight to think that they are a lonely and superior few. They may be influenced in this, as in almost everything else, by romantic memories; memories of Shelley singing hymns unbidden in the light of thought, of Marx churning out *Das Kapital* on a few pounds borrowed here and there, of young Russian idealists of the pre-Lenin brand being knouted by brutal Cossacks at the disproportionate rate of ten knouts per idealist. Whatever the reason, they combine faith in The People and faith also in the invincibility of the truth, with a belief that they are a small, pioneering minority. Rather late in the Spanish Civil War I attended a little discussion where, for a miracle, argument was reasonable and decently objective till I made the suggestion that seventy-five per cent of the British people favoured the Republic more or less warmly (an estimate which we have since been given to understand was fairly accurate for the Cabinet). Progressive hairs rose at once. It was casting a reflection on right-thinking people to suggest that they were supported by a mass opinion. They wanted to be lonely and unpopular thinkers, and if they weren't allowed to be lonely and unpopular thinkers they would just stop thinking.<sup>1</sup>

There is more in this than sentimental echoes of the Red Flag with its vaults and martyred dead; there is obviously a considerable trace of vanity. But there may be something else. It suggests the possibility that progressives may wake up, sometime, in the middle of the night. Finding themselves with the majority may fill them with an unexamined surprise. Their complacency may be no more than skin deep. 'We all have a Fifth Column in our hearts,' said a prominent progressive in a burst

<sup>1</sup>More recently I heard a man say with complete seriousness that the destruction of Guernica had raised no interest or feeling. The world, he said, had ignored it. Only a handful, who were called cranks for their pains, had taken any interest

of private candour. It is a bad place to have a Fifth Column. you cannot purge the heart.

However shallow progressive complacency may be, it is at least deep enough to make argument difficult. Progressives do not, as a rule, try to show why and where you are wrong; they take your error for granted and speculate on the cause. It is high time that their own make-up and their own credentials were examined. For the progressives who speak for The People and who are sponsoring a social revolution in The People's name, are not the people as Burns or Lincoln understood them. They are, instead, a large section of the bourgeois salariat enjoying unattached working-class support.

They command some support from the genuinely horny-handed toilers; but they are not the toilers. 'Who are "They" and who are "Us"?' Lenin asked with insistent wisdom. Mr. Edward Hulton's sympathies may be all with the miner, but the miner's are not all with Mr. Hulton. The differences between the Labour Party and the I.L.P. are a matter of burning interest and even excitement to the professional politicians of Glasgow; but they are a matter of stony indifference to the electors, as every election shows. A prepared and engineered revolutionary movement like this progressive movement of The People, may call for and obtain a large popular support, but none the less it bears the stamp of a group. Promising deliverance to all men, it brings particular satisfaction to some, and the type of satisfaction and the type of persons satisfied give the revolution its special quality. The special quality of the American Revolution is obvious in its achievement; it put Benjamin Franklin where he belonged, and left Washington where he had always been. Not all revolutions have ended with such comfortable neatness. The French Revolution was written up by poets presenting a pretty prospect of natural goodness abounding in a life of pastoral simplicity, enlivened, perhaps, with a touch of journalism. Events did not move quite in that way. It was a far cry, but a short jump, from Paul and Virginia to Hèbert and Marat. There was, of course, much more in the French Revolution than sentimentalities from Rousseau, but Rousseauism did give the revolution its special original trend and its particular intention; a trend which was particularly satisfactory to one type of mind. It is always difficult for zealous and radical reformers to remember how much a reform intended for the benefit of all is a particular liberation and



satisfaction for themselves. It is easy to assume unconsciously that the satisfaction is a subject of general and deep desire, and to assume, also, that its gratification is worth a very large price in bloodshed, upheaval or other compensatory loss. Mr. Victor Gollancz, in his praise of revolutionary Russia, told us of the pure bliss he experienced in Moscow, and nowhere else outside of Russia, in being able to forget entirely that he was a Jew. His gratification was very natural, but it was of a special kind, and not likely to be shared by those who had to live in Moscow and found it uncomfortable to remember that they were Christians.

The great social changes which are to enthrone The People, in Britain at least, bear, in their basis of principles, in the tactics pursued, and indicated for the future, and in the ends that are aimed at, the marks of the special needs, ambitions and ideas of one group. The progressives have their good qualities of heart and mind, but we have seen people like them before, and they have not been the makers of history. They have had, and they have now, great influence on public affairs, but only in times of good order and settled conditions. When strong passions are loosed, their authority cracks; and, if they try to reassert it, they are shot in large numbers by preoccupied gunmen who are almost annoyed at having to waste time and ammunition on such trivial impediments to the sudden swelling of catastrophic events. The People are a minority, and a middle-class minority, and one without talent for handling great events. It would be well if they themselves realized who they are.

## CHAPTER TWO

---

### 'NO SUPERIOR'

**T**HE progressive mind entertains the conviction that peace, righteousness and reason will reign when the classless society is achieved. Some understand the classless society in its strictly economic meaning, and all understand it in the wider sense of one man being as good as another, at all times and in all respects. There may or may not be a difference in income in the ideal world, but there will be no difference in status or human respect.

The idea of the classless society is rather like the notion of a

bloodless war; a very agreeable condition, if only things would work out that way. But a revolution does not work out that way. It creates the career open to talents, which is a very different thing, and it is the nature of the talent which finds its career that gives the special quality to every revolution. The mind which inspires the present social movement is the clerkly mind, the mind of the men and women of good formal education, who have a talent for study and administration, or the gift of free and popular expression. They are the spokesmen and interpreters of The People.

One would think that these persons had done rather well for themselves in the last century; but no. Admittedly, they have advanced very far in power, prestige and status, but appetite grows on what it feeds on. There are barriers which still block their advance, privileges which are still denied, so—'One fight more, the best and the last.' Until that fight is won the clerkly mind will be frustrated, indignant and unhappy.

That sense of frustration is remarkable, for it indicates that the ambition of the clerk is virtually illimitable, and that is a new thing. In an ordered society, such as the medieval, people knew their position and function and limitations. Some of that salutary knowledge remains, but not with the clerks. If anybody were to rewrite the *Canterbury Tales* in a modern setting he would have no difficulty with some of the characters. The popular legend of Colonel Blimp might deter him from making the Knight an army man. He would look more at home in naval uniform, but there would be no need to change much in his character or ways of thought; the type is happily still with us. The Squire would, almost inevitably, become an R.A.F. pilot, and the Prioress would be positively improved by being posted to the Wrens. A nice boy, a nice girl, and a patient, hardy warrior—they are still with us.

But there would be trouble with the Clerk. The Clerk of Oxford, it will be remembered, was much attached to Aristotle. He was very poor, but he had no ambition to be rich. He would gladly teach and, equally gladly, he would learn, and he prayed for the souls of those who helped him to live his meagre and noble life.

That would never do for a prizeman of the London School of Economics. To begin with, the Clerk was travelling to the wrong shrine. A modern clerk, rejoicing in the loathsome title of 'intellectual,' would go on pilgrimage to no tomb, except



Lenin's, where miracles are considered as sabotage. Again, the Clerk was a taciturn person, which was a foolish thing to be. After all, there is no sense in being educated if you don't talk all the time.

But, worst of all, the Clerk was humble. He did not feel called upon to take charge of the travelling arrangements of the company. He did not criticize the military talents of the Knight or try to improve the political thinking of the Squire. He did not lecture the Franklin on the liquidation of the kulaks, or examine the Merchant on his commercial ethics. Above all, he was not disturbed by class distinctions or by the accepted limitations of his own place in society.

The Clerk thought very highly of learning and, no doubt, had a proud sense of the honour of his function and vocation, regarding himself as a humble and imperfect servant of a noble cause. But he did not think learning was an end in itself, and he took it for granted that his own purpose must be subordinated to the welfare of society, and that the larger purposes of society must be subordinated to the intention of God. The thing was not even an argued principle. It was axiomatic, it was instinctive. So when the Innkeeper told him to cheer up for God's sake, he cheered up—for God's sake, and mildly accepted the ruling of the competent authority on good cheer.

‘ Hoste, quod he, I am under your yerde.  
Ye have of us now the governance  
And therefore wolde I do you obeysance.’

Authority, order, the subordination of particular ends—these were the principles of his social behaviour. He neither envied nor sought to destroy the military honour of the Knight; he did not resent the easy education of the Squire; he neither despised nor tried pathetically to emulate the large gusto of the Wife of Bath. He did not aspire to be everything, to know everything and to run the world. Quite strictly, he knew his place. He and his kind are no more. ‘He is now ded, and nailed in his cheste.’

The austere and humble scholar is not, of course, unknown to-day; but he is not the typical clerk of the times. The typical clerk is not even a scholar; he is a man of loose general education who can talk. He may be deeply familiar with something, but he will talk about everything.<sup>1</sup> He has a boundless esteem, not for

<sup>1</sup> For an example of free talking, Mr. J. B. S. Haldane told his eager readers in the *Daily Worker* that the word ‘jolly’ came from a late Latin

himself, perhaps, but for his kind and for his training. He is not inclined to admit that there is any limit to the effectiveness, or any justifiable check to the exercise, of his special talents and training. He feels he has the light, and thinks he ought to have the leading. There is some excuse for the alarming expansion of his clerkly self-importance, for the need of his services has been enormously increased by the growth of education, of popular journalism and literature and of the application of the examination test for public posts.

The importance now attaching to examination talent and to gifts for bureaucratic administration and popular exposition is great, and largely inevitable; but it is not enough for the possessors of these talents. One more push, they feel, and they will have everything. 'King, Cawdor, Glamis, all.' That was Macbeth's ambition; it was also Kerensky's. The last push which is to bring the progressive clerks to their goal is disguised, even to themselves, as equality for all. Equality means the obliteration of all inequalities, except those of the native and specialized talent which they possess themselves. That is not how they talk of it, nor even how they think of it, but it is what they really mean. That is the bias of their minds.

They make this claim, so gratifying to themselves, on behalf of the poor; but there they make a large assumption. There is no reason to believe that superiority of brain is any more popular among humble folk than superiority of birth or wealth. Indeed, there is every reason to believe the contrary. It is easier to submit to a superiority that is not absolutely a part of the superior man than to submit to a superiority that is all you can see of the man. You can dissociate wealth and title from the owner; he can even do it himself. Dukes have been known to apologize for their rank, and millionaires have been known to deprecate their millions: but nobody has ever succeeded in apologizing convincingly for being clever. Earl Russell can call himself, and, in effect, make himself, plain Mr. Russell, by a simple act of the will. But perhaps he is not aware that the working classes who do not much resent his title would very

word meaning 'devilish.' When Christianity turned against the people, the devil became popular. Hence, jolly (devilish) meaning 'nice' in English and 'pretty' in French. He told them, also, that, while 'four' and 'seven' had changed their spelling since Anglo-Saxon days, their meaning was still the same.—News Item.

much resent his facile exposition of objectionable views on sensual love, if they ever read them, which they never do. They would not be able to counter his arguments, but they would feel that he was making an arrogant use of talent, and they would be right.

Of course, Mr. Russell does not mean to be arrogant, and if he is free of social superiorities, he should also be free of the painfully obvious social resentments which disfigure the writings of Mr. J. B. Priestley, Mr. H. G. Wells, and many another. These men are baffled and exasperated by the continued popular affection for the monarchy, and they have no moderation in their bile when they write about the 'gentry.' There is no denying their sincere desire to improve the lot of struggling and needy people, but this particular resentment is personal to themselves. They have achieved all that talent can achieve; but they cannot be born again, or go back to school. Therefore the aristocratic tradition and the public school tradition annoy them exceedingly: they can see nothing but snobbery and servility in superiorities they cannot reach. (It is very odd how many progressives denounce the public schools, but are very firm in upholding the superiority of Oxford over provincial universities. They were at Oxford, but they were not at any public school.)

Snobbery of birth, school and breeding is, of course, a reality; but the reaction of the intellectual is not the reaction of the poor, who are resigned to the thought that there will always be snobbery of one kind or another, and are not much inclined to believe in the complete classlessness of those who are rapidly climbing above them. Mr. Wells has complained with justice of the vulgar legends which gather round persons who have risen to eminence from obscure beginnings. They are accused of wearing made-up ties, or of not knowing what to do with knives and forks. Why, Mr. Wells asked, should it be assumed that a man who has travelled far by virtue of his character and talent is incapable of picking up a lackey's knowledge of dress? Why, indeed? But a working man would rather ask why men of eminence should be so very anxious to pick up a lackey's knowledge of dress. It would be difficult to provide him with a classless answer.

Resentment of accidental advantages, like birth and social training, is not the only resentment that the sedentary clerk expresses. There is also resentment of the gifts of character for which he is not normally conspicuous. Dislike for hunting,



shooting and fishing is perhaps less a social than an urban prejudice. Horror of blood sports may have moral justification, but it goes rather badly with a kindly tolerance of revolutionary massacre. The long and lively campaign against the soldier caste of all nations, and particularly our own, owed something to unconscious jealousy. People spontaneously admire soldiers: they do not spontaneously admire officials of the Pig Control Board or experts on the pre-natal formation of osteoblast.

In fact, ordinary folk are not nearly so much impressed by mere intellectuality as intellectuals are. They admire cleverness (so long as it does not put on side), but they do not think it is supremely important. They never shared the contempt for Hitler which intellectuals enjoyed for so long. They saw that he was tough, and they knew that he had not got to where he was by means of scholarships. They never made the mistake of liking him, but, equally, they never made the mistake of thinking he was funny. That same instinct awakened at the news of Hess's arrival in Scotland. Mr. Ernest Bevin announced that Hess had murdered trade-unionists, and therefore the public might easily guess what he, Mr. Bevin, thought of him, Hess. (Mr. Bevin occasionally talks as if there was something sacramental about the trade-union salariat.) But the men who live by hard physical toil noticed something which appeared to have escaped the attention of official commentators. They knew that Hess was a middle-aged man, of great power in Germany, able to command luxuries, and very much in the chauffeur-driven class. Yet, when he wanted to fly from Germany to a place near Hamilton, he simply took an aeroplane and flew there. When he got to the right spot, he turned his aeroplane upside down, kicked himself free and came down by parachute. The workers did not like Hess any better for this feat, but they saw that he had done it, and they could not quite see Mr. Bevin doing the same. They did not deny that Mr. Bevin's moral character and political principles were by much the more sublime, but they suspected that, in violent and dangerous days, men like Mr. Bevin were not really a match for men like Hess. It added to the thoughtfulness with which they regarded our war effort.

Physical hardiness and toughness are not necessary in school-rooms or laboratories, or in Government or newspaper offices; but they are necessary in mines and steelworks; and miners and steel workers believe that they are also necessary for effective

ruling. Intellectuals are apt to underrate the primitive virtues. It was a tenet of progressive faith that the best soldier was the man who hated the whole business of war, was infuriated by its futility, disgusted by its squalor, and was extremely anxious to be done with it and get home. This picture of the perfect soldier was no doubt compounded of Wordsworth's 'Happy Warrior' and some troubled memories of the Oxford resolution against fighting for king and country. It summarized fairly accurately the state of mind which, we are told, permeated the French Army. '*Il faut en finir*' was the order of the day. The men wanted to get home. They have not got home, yet. None the less, the audience of the Brains Trust heard a little disquisition on these lines, *after* the collapse at Sedan.

The lessons of the war have not been entirely lost on everybody, and it is now widely recognized that the fighting virtues have still some value, and that the man who fights with enthusiasm is likely to fight well. Indeed, before the present war, the prestige of the warlike arts was sharply raised by the excellent performance of the International Brigade in Spain, a performance that was considered to be all the more creditable because the men were fighting for a country not their own.

Nothing has happened to reconcile the intellectual to those engaged in the sordid traffic of the market-place. In the twenties, the 'hard-faced men who looked as if they had done well out of the war' were as heartily denounced as the carpet-slipped diplomats. But the hard-faced men, though less admirable, were perhaps more effective than the soft-faced men who looked as if they had done well in the Home Civil.

The intellectual does begin to appreciate business when it becomes big enough to resemble a State department. He has a certain respect for Lord Nuffield and men of his calibre. In really big business the element of origination is less obvious than the element of repetition and organization. The intellectual appreciates that. He does not know how that kind of thing is done; but he knows how it is run.

No doubt a progressive intellectual would take exception to this catalogue of prejudices. He would say that his hostility to privileges of birth and breeding is hostility to a system that has outlived its day; and is now an obstacle to the advance of society. He would say that the military virtues are survivals of savagery.

and, if they are still useful, they are so because savagery is still with us; a state of affairs which is deplorable, and which he has every right to deplore.

He might deny that his resentment of privilege is at all personal, and it would be difficult to prove that it was; for it is not possible to read another man's mind. But it is plain to be seen that the expression of that hostility bears every mark of personal resentment, and is frequently mischievous. (To quote only one example, Mr. Tom Harrisson, discussing hostility to the mawkish nature of the Forces wireless programme, said that such hostility was undemocratic. Those who disliked the programme were usually men in the upper brackets of income. He could, and should have said, men of better education or natural taste, but he took the meaningless financial criterion, thus expressing irrelevant resentment and distorting judgement.)

A more candid progressive might allow a great deal of the criticism outlined here. He might say: 'We *are* resentful of superiority we cannot claim ourselves. What of it? We resent it because it limits our influence. We claim the leadership of the modern world. Mass technique demands our talents. Mass education demands a huge supply of lively, contemporary minds, such as ours. There are many progressives who are not like us, who are not clerks; but we admit that they take the colour of their thought from us. They do so because, whatever you say, we *are* the future. The world of mechanical order and universal peace and prosperity is almost at hand, and we will realize it. Time is short, but we are confident. We understand the means, we know the desirable end, and the forces of evolution are on our side. We deserve leadership. We are not avaricious, we are neither cruel nor proud, and few of us are even anxious for public fame. If we want the age to bear our stamp, it is because ours must be the stamp of the age. We represent the forces of intelligent and ordered planning which must prevail if the world is not to slide back into chaos. The world will be governed by us, or it will not be governed at all.'

Such is the claim that might be made by any frank follower of Mr. H. G. Wells. It will be profitable to examine the credentials of such candidates for power. If it should prove that they misunderstand the nature of Man, his capabilities and the springs of his actions, their credentials are null. They may attain power, but they will not keep it. Britain has been fortunate in



escaping an experience which has afflicted some other countries ; a government which is composed of a legislature of professors and an executive of thugs. But the knowledge of what has happened elsewhere should make us consider our future with anxiety. The same disasters might not overtake us if the present idea of a People's Government is ever realized, but some disaster will. There is no safety and no promise in the leadership of people who think that the conditions of a worthy life ever are or ever can be made easy, that only a little effort is needed to make sure that the world will, in no long time, be governed completely by reason and the reasonable virtues.

### CHAPTER THREE

## THE END OF THE RAINBOW

---

'I see the dawn upon the mountain tops.'—MR. LLOYD GEORGE

'Make the world safe for Democracy.'—WOODROW WILSON.

'La gloire de notre civilisation est de nous mettre en état de vivre presque normalement, quelquefois.'—CLEMENCEAU

**T**HE progressive mind is perfectionist. It is not satisfied with improving, much less with merely maintaining, the civilization that it knows ;<sup>1</sup> but it must always be striving for the New Jerusalem, the City of Man, and hoping to see its towers rise in England's green and pleasant land. One would have thought that the attempt to build a material New Jerusalem in Jerusalem would have inspired a mood of caution. It there appeared that the New Jerusalem was a shooting word and called for an exceptionally strong body of police. But no disasters and no disappointments can destroy the happy, though dangerous, dream.

The thorough-going optimist continues to believe that, in the end, the cause of enlightenment will prevail because it must. With some this belief finds support in the majestically inevitable workings of the dialectic, with others in a Tennysonian force of righteousness, not in ourselves, that makes for higher things.

'What,' asked Mr. Wells, 'is the culminating effect of a survey of

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire said that the only way to have good laws is to burn all existing laws and start afresh. Hitler did that.

history, of the science of life, and of existing conditions? It is an effect of steadily accentuated growth in power, range and understanding. All these things lead up to us—and how could they seem to do otherwise? Progress continues in spite of every human fear and folly. Men are borne along through space and time regardless of themselves, as if to the awakening greatness of Man.'

There are some whose survey of history has led them to a less rosy conclusion, and who learn nothing at all from the science of life because they have not discovered it. Mr. Wells himself now finds less in existing conditions to be bright about, since growth in power, range and understanding has led up to Hitler. The last two sentences are decidedly peculiar. Progress is not a force like gravity or magnetism working in or through objects. It is a word of approbation bestowed by Man on himself and on the world around him. It is a name for the development which has led up to us. We say it is Progress—and how could it seem to be otherwise?

The faith which Mr. Wells somewhat fitfully proclaims is the faith which Voltaire attacked in *Candide*. It survived his satire and it elevated and sustained the young idealists of the French Revolution until they died abruptly under the ingenious new machine. Taking a very short view of history and a very narrow view of human improvement, there has been much to encourage optimism in the last two centuries. For example, life was good to a man like Benjamin Franklin. After a career of very varied interests and gradually increasing prosperity he died rich and universally honoured, just in time to avoid the embarrassment of seeing his French friends engulfed in the turmoil which he and they had helped to create. Reasonable living and reasonable argument had been very profitable to himself, and he thought they could and should be equally beneficial to the whole world. He wanted to raise 'a United Party for Virtue by forming the virtuous and good men of all nations into a regular body, to be governed by suitable good and wise rules, which good and wise men may probably be more unanimous in their obedience to, than common people are to common laws.'

Franklin had to admit that perfection, as the common people understood it, was hardly possible for Man; for, like modern clerks, he was not inclined to be too energetic in the uprooting of the little frailties he happened to notice in himself. But that



did not seem to him a good reason for being any the less a perfectionist. 'An angel, by being incorporeal, is allowed some imperfections we are at present incapable of, and less liable to some imperfections than we are liable to. If they (the sceptics) mean that a man is not capable of being perfect here as he is capable of being in heaven, that may be true likewise. But that a man is not capable of being so perfect here as he is capable of being here is not sense.'

Whether *that* is sense or not will be judged more by temperament than by logic; but there can be no doubt that Franklin believed things to be making for the best in a highly agreeable world. The idea of virtue entertained by his intellectual descendants might have startled Franklin, who was himself no model of orthodoxy, but despite drastic changes in the constitution and declared objects, the bright shadow of the wise, benevolent, international party is still upon us. Perfection is still pursued by the path of Reason. 'The Whigs,' said Walter Scott, 'will live and die in the heresy that the world is ruled by little pamphlets and speeches and that if you can sufficiently demonstrate that a line of conduct is most consistent with men's interest, you have therefore and thereby demonstrated that they will at length after a few speeches on the subject adopt it of course.' The Whigs have not changed; but they have extended their technique a little by the useful invention of the conference.

Perhaps the best of these was Robert's Owen's proposed 'world convention to emancipate the human race from ignorance, poverty, division, sin and misery.' Even to his friends this seemed rather too much for a single gathering and the agenda of most conferences is rather less ambitious, but faith in the efficacy of discussion is marvellously strong in many people who think they can afford to laugh at Robert Owen. It has often been said that the Versailles Conference would have been raised to an altogether higher level if the Germans had been invited to join in the discussions, as if any small diplomatic success they might have been allowed to achieve would have weighed with them against the consequences and the fact of defeat. Pacifists are particularly attached to the method of conference. 'When the war is over,' they say, 'the fighting nations will have to meet round a table. Why don't they meet now?' The argument would be more convincing if it were possible to forget that Czechoslovakia was lost

at a conference. We hope that at the next conference Germany will appear without a gun.

The perfectionist view of the ideal conference was well expressed by Ramsay MacDonald. He described his discussions with General Dawes, concerning an Anglo-American naval agreement. He said: 'We did not examine statements meticulously in order to discover how we could put something over the other without his knowing it. The method was altogether different. We stated the difficulties of our respective countries. He told me his; I equally frankly told him mine. He told me what he thought he could do; I told him what I thought I could do. He told me what public opinion demanded of him; I told him what public opinion demanded of me. In that sincerity, in that simplicity, in that informality, we conducted our negotiations.' In the same simplicity, the Anglo-German naval agreement was negotiated.

Shelley was another simple man. He conducted a leaflet raid on Dublin, scattering his pamphlets from a hotel balcony, telling the Irish that they were enslaved and encouraging them to be free. The Irish were good-humoured about it, but they indicated by their attitude that they preferred more solid encouragement than eloquence.

Shelley, like Robert Owen, was 'before his time.' He did not understand that the preliminary educational work for the conference to end conferences had yet to be done. Others were slightly more realistic. Some pinned their faith to political change and, perhaps under the inspiration of evangelical religion, the agitation for the First Reform Bill took on the air of a religious revival. In 1817 a pamphlet was issued with the following title:<sup>1</sup>

The Voice of God!!! In support of the Grand Object of Parliamentary Reform. O Ye Noblemen, Clergymen, Gentlemen, Tradesmen, Working Men and Poor Men of Great Britain and Ireland, Hear Ye the Word of the Lord.

By their fruits ye shall know them.—CHRIST.

The working men and poor men of Great Britain and Ireland found the fruit to be less appetising than they had hoped. Some of them even discovered that they were worse off than they had been before, and even now when the franchise is spread as far as

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Dickens World*, by Humphry House.

reason permits, there is a general feeling among the same classes, and others, that the Party of Virtue has a thin time at the polls

Some put huge faith in the possibilities of popular education, which is the long-term preparatory work for the conference-to-be. Dr. Guthrie went so far as to assert that the man who had learned to read and write was much less likely than the illiterate to be blown up by explosives or smothered by falling earth while engaged on such useful toil as the construction of roads and railways. Others maintained that musketry was much improved in the Army by the spread of literacy. Cobden's zeal for Free Trade soared far above the vulgar thought of profits. Greg believed that Political Economy, not parliamentary reform, was the voice of God. He called it benevolence under the guise of Science, 'a close observation and a humble imitation of the plans of Providence.' He was reverent on the subject. The most ugly-seeming consequences he explained as part of the Great Design.

The immense technical advances of the nineteenth century were welcomed as of great moral value. Dr. Arnold greeted the Rugby railway line with enthusiasm. 'I rejoice to see it,' he wrote, 'and think that feudality is gone for ever.' This in spite of the class-bitterness caused by the railways' treatment of third-class passengers. Telegraphy inspired Dickens with similar gratification. He was delighted to see telegraph wires piercing the 'cruel old heart' of the Roman Coliseum. Cruelty, he believed, could hardly stand up to electricity. He died in the year of the Ems telegram. Macaulay believed and emphatically stated that the railway and the steamship were not only additions to Man's material powers, but were also, like Cobden's Free Trade, a heartening advance towards universal peace.

Macaulay, indeed, is, at first sight, the very image of the glad confident morning of all-round progress. The history of England, he said, was emphatically one of progress. So far as he was able to observe, he was quite right. The accretions in scientific knowledge which led to an enormous increase in the production of goods he believed to be matched by an advance in political wisdom; and that was true in so far as an increasing number of people were ready to subscribe to his opinions. He thought that Britain was becoming healthier, wiser and more prosperous every day and that all classes had gained greatly from the Industrial Revolution. He looked to the future. He looked to 1930, when, he believed, the population of England might well be



thirty million, and that Ben Nevis might be cultivated to the top, as closely as a flower garden. He was wrong about Ben Nevis, and he did not foresee the terrible destructive potentialities of applied science. He foresaw neither the first Great War nor the second, and he did not guess how nearly and by what means Saint Paul's came to ruin. He omitted the passions from his calculations.

There were limits to Macaulay's optimism. He did not believe that we would be much better than Shakespeare in the vein of poetry, and he suspected that humanity would never be so far purified of superstition as to permit of the disappearance of the Catholic Church. Also, being a man of vigorous logic, he refused to patronize the past, because he did not want to humble himself before the future. He believed that Progress would continue its majestic course, and that the achievements of his own age would be dwarfed by those of ages to come, but he took a manly stand on the matter. His generation was as wise and as comfortable as its place in Time permitted, and he demanded of the Future, however wealthy it might be in material and spiritual things, that it should accord to him the respect that all decent people accord to the worthy and respectable poor. His anticipation of greater things to come helped to set a fashion which has been very advantageous to cranks and humbugs in all the arts and sciences. However feeble, perverse or silly a thing may be, it must be treated with some caution if it appears to be new; for it may be before its time, it may be the anticipation of some future splendour.

Macaulay was happy to think that political wisdom would grow from age to age. 'First come hints, then fragments of systems, then defective systems. The sound opinion, held for a time by some bold speculator, becomes the opinion of a small minority, of a strong minority, of a majority of mankind. Thus, the great progress goes on, till schoolboys laugh at the jargon which imposed on Bacon, till country rectors condemned the illiberality and intolerance of Sir Thomas More.' That was how he saw the thing working, but he thought it must work in favour of himself. He would have been pained and astonished to think that, first, some bold speculators, then a small minority, then a majority would laugh at the jargon which imposed on Macaulay. An interfering, paternal government he associated with Laud, High Toryism and the past. It is the government of the present

and the future. He said he would accept paternalism, if it could be shown that the State bore the love to its subjects that a father bears to his child. It is now the father's love which is seriously questioned, and its value denied. Even the infallibility of Reason itself is regarded by many with as much scepticism as they show to the virtues of Free Trade. To see these shocking thoughts triumphant would have staggered Macaulay, and he could not pretend that he was watching a temporary and insignificant retreat in the march of Man; for it is only too clear that the heresies are accepted as platitudes by persons of the same clerkly mind as himself, the inheritors of his prestige, his tradition and his outlook. It would certainly seem to him that Progress was going unaccountably backwards.

Socialism came on the scene with an even greater salvationist appeal than the Reform Bill or the Channel boat. It was not enough to say that Socialism was the infallible means of Progress. It was more intimately progressive than that. It was simply another name for Progress, a description of what must happen. It was discovered that the curse of mankind was property and the Profit-Motive. Property was theft; but it was more than theft of goods: it was theft of the soul, of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The condition of the working classes which filled Macaulay with high satisfaction<sup>1</sup> was described as worse than the state of a naked aborigine. Socialism would get rid of all that. It would get rid of envy, pride, greed, cruelty, superstition, 'ignorance, division, sin and misery.' It would get rid of shoddy manufacture, bad taste in the arts, untruthful journalism, titles of nobility, beggary and prostitution. Some thought it would get rid of religion; others that it would put an end to carnivorous habits. It would certainly abolish war.

Perhaps it would not altogether get rid of drunkenness. It was accepted, of course, that most people got drunk because the System bowed them down; but it was also regrettably obvious that quite a number got drunk because they liked a drink. A separate crusading army, with a limited objective, competed with the Socialists in fervour. The Nonconformists put all the power of their organized conscience behind the Temperance Movement.

<sup>1</sup> Bright was equally pleased. He said: 'How satisfactory' of the low wages of the middle nineteenth century. Disraeli, discussing a farm labourers' agitation, said the men could 'scarcely keep their countenances' when they made their complaints, knowing that they already enjoyed a wage of fourteen shillings a week.

For them, State ownership and the abolition of the Profit-Motive was not nearly enough; a pub was still a pub: *écrasez l'Infame*. Socialism without Prohibition was insufficient; but many believed that Prohibition was sufficient, without any other change.

There'll be work for everybody and we'll all get double pay  
When the pubs are closed for ever and the drink is swept away.

The old Temperance song had the right salvationist swing, but it did not exaggerate the serious sentiments of the Movement. In 1897 a Temperance Convention passed the following resolution:

'That, as the traffic in intoxicating liquors is the greatest foe to the development of industry, tending to commercial depression, congesting the labour market, increasing the hopeless mass of the unemployed, and reducing the power of the people to purchase the necessities and comforts of life, this Convention, fully convinced that the suppression of this traffic would ensure constant and well-paid employment, adequate profits, and the solution of the problem of labour, calls upon all who value the expansion of our trade and commerce, and the peace and contentment of our people, to unite in a strenuous effort for the commercial outlawry of the drink system in the great industrial interests of the nation.'

The resolution was passed by the Convention, but its tenor was unacceptable to the Socialists, who had no desire to secure adequate profits. None the less, Prohibition was congenial to the Socialist mind. It was an austere, tidy and economical idea.

So was Feminism. Whatever evils of the human heart were not eradicated with drink and the Profit-Motive would not survive sex equality. What was left of prostitution after poverty had stopped sending women on to the streets and drink had stopped sending men after them would vanish when women had their share in government. Feminism was a natural ally of Socialism, for women were downtrodden, and it could not be denied that they were proletarian. It was thought by many to be as great a liberation as Socialism itself, if not greater. When Nora left the Doll's House and the audience listened for the closing door, they heard a sound that echoed round the world. But the echoes of the great enthusiasm have died away.

'We are all Socialists nowadays'; we are all feminists nowadays; and the colour has gone out of both. Nora has found that



her commercial activities provide a small enough quantity of chocolate creams. The problem of the double standard of morality has been disconcertingly solved by reaching equality on the lower level. It has been discovered that prostitution has deeper roots than the Profit-Motive. It has also been discovered that the results of Socialist experiments, sometimes satisfactory and sometimes not, are obvious only in matters of technical management and production, and not at all in those wider and more generous ameliorations of the human condition which Socialist technique hardly touches.

Progressives might retort that there had, in fact, been progress, that the ameliorations were there and were advancing—before the last war. Tolerance and kindness had increased greatly in that fairly small but very important part of the world which was the seat of Progress. Bear-baiting and the duel were virtually extinct, blood sports and boxing were under a cloud, and the voice of minorities was loud in the land. If poverty had not by any means disappeared, it had at least been much reduced. 'No. 5 John St.' was a feeble 'revelation' compared with the social fiction of Macaulay's day; and the difference was more than a difference in material circumstances: it was a measure of the march of social conscience. Municipal planning and control had achieved brilliant results, particularly in Germany. The medical and nursing professions had changed unrecognizably for the better in the course of a lifetime. Education was steadily rising in its own desert and in public esteem. Above all, and most valuably, the Civil Service had grown in worth. Macaulay, the prophet both of Progress and a pure administration, would have been humbly grateful to know that while his work in planting the great Indian Babu-tree continued to be much respected, it was generally agreed that his services had been considerably overpaid. Wealth and pride of possession were rapidly losing prestige among the virtuous.

A network of international conferences and committees was drawing the nations together. Science knew no boundaries at all, literature increasingly despised them, and proletarian solidarity promised the happy prospect of a Class War to end War. To a man like Freud, a European war was a grotesque anachronism. (When it did come, the loosing of national passions and bigotries in the highest intellectual quarters surprisingly surprised the student of the subconscious.) Jaurès, the most eloquent of

Socialists, believed, on the one hand, that the causes of war would not die until Capitalism died and, on the other, that war itself could be prevented by the united will of the workers. He was opposed to unilateral disarmament, for that, he said, would merely be an invitation to the aggressor. The nations must remain armed in self-defence; but on no account must they fight.

A later progressive refined on the spirit of the Jaurès analysis by suggesting that the military guard at the Cenotaph on Armistice Day should parade without arms. We had gone past the age of weapons, he seemed to think, but there might still be a need for uniforms. Jaurès did not go so far as that; he had too much of the Revolution in his blood. He had a recipe for the successive 'incidents' which troubled the sleep of the early century. Whenever war became a possibility, the governments concerned must accept arbitration. The government which refused was guilty, and the proletariat of that country must have a revolution. If they did so, it would be only decent of the enemy to stand aside and wait for peace proposals. But if the enemy was low enough to advance, then the People's Army of the country invaded must rush to the frontier and hurl them back. It was a simple and inspiring programme. The Bastille. Valmy. The Marseillaise.

It did not happen quite like that. When the last strain came, the network of international good-fellowship parted like rotten string. The friendly feeling cultivated by the growth of tolerance, by cultured association and by a great and beneficent volume of foreign travel proved weak indeed; but no weaker than the solidarity of the workers. These bonds might, should, must have grown sufficiently strong in time, but—'Ask me for anything except Time!' Once again, the Party forfeited its deposit.

If proletarian reaction to the situation was not what Jaurès had hoped for, the situation itself was not quite what he had predicted. When he called on the working class to restrain an aggressive government, he was speaking, inevitably, with a minatory eye on his own government and people; but when the time came, it appeared that the French Government was innocent of bloody intentions, and that it was the duty of his German brothers to throw up the barricades and take the considerable personal and national risks which would follow.

Curiously, the German Socialists read events in precisely the opposite way. Lenin wagered a hat that the Social Democrats would not vote against the War Credits, but would weakly abstain.



He was wrong. They voted for them. 'Who are They and who are Us?' The Party of Virtue and the few remaining international Socialists asked the fundamental question with growing alarm. Keir Hardie struggled hard to rally the British working class. He complained that the Peace Society had been founded in 1848 (not itself a peaceful year) and that now, after sixty years of peace propaganda, ten million men were marching to shed each other's blood; which seemed to surprise him. He said in a mood of unhappy prophecy: 'We are much nearer to the Germans in thought and feeling than we shall ever be to the Russians.' It was all in vain.

'There is in great affairs,' said Grey of Fallodon, 'much more in the minds of the events than in the minds of the chief actors.' Certainly the men looked small compared with the issue they tried to handle. What had so often threatened to happen was threatening again, was happening. Events took charge. Thus Jaurès had strongly opposed the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and had blamed his own government almost equally with the Austrian. Because of the annexation, the Archduke was murdered in Sarajevo, and, in a few days, Jaurès himself was murdered in a Parisian restaurant. The great orator was shot twice and became at once speechless, though he did not instantly die. It was a personal tragedy, but not otherwise important, for he had nothing more to say.

It was a lovely summer when the old world passed away. The thing came so suddenly that scores of thousands were travelling over Europe making and renewing international friendships. The sun shone full on the sleeping rivers and the vine and the corn. But peace was not among men. The Emperor put his trust in God. Manchester held a meeting of protest. The men went singly from their homes, sustained by obedience, love of country, or simply by an ancient endurance of things; till they met with their fellows in their regiments, and then they marched to the drum beat in the blood. The tourists came hurrying home through a world that was already growing sinister and strange, and they brought memories of what would never be fully seen again, the pleasant villages, the friendly peoples, the slow gains of civilization, the recent changes of the modern mind, the tragic deception of peace and inevitable progress that 'had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.'

The lights went out all over Europe.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## POST MORTEM

**I**N the early days of the war, Arnold Bennett wrote a little book to convince the American public of German guilt. He felt that some proof was called for, because the fact of German guilt seemed strange to Bennett himself. The Germans, he said, were 'docile, ingenuous, studious, industrious, idealistic and thorough.' Their energy was illimitable and their achievements in 'sheer civilization' were brilliant. For an instance of sheer civilization, he chose the municipal government of Frankfort. How a nation with such enlightened local government came to adopt an unjust and aggressive policy was the problem which vexed him. German docility provided the answer. Because of that docility, a military caste held power in Germany and were able to pervert the amiable obedience of the idealistic race to their own savage ends. Thus it was really through the excess of a virtue that the Germans had brought ruin on themselves and on the world.

That was a popular view among progressives who equated 'sheer civilization' with efficient drainage. With eyes focused on everything which indicated advance, they were (and they still are) continually tempted to ignore all evidence of retrogression, and to forget that the first, necessary achievement of any civilization is to have a civilized government. Sincerely convinced that an honest zeal for smoke abatement and a native lust for ruthless action could not inhabit the same breast, they made the comforting discovery of the Two Nations in Germany, the spiritual aliens of the ruling class and the great majority of admirable people with whom it was a progressive pleasure for other nations to vie in achievements of sheer civilization, industry and ingenuousness. It seemed to them that one of the noblest purposes of the war was to liberate Germany from the oppression of the Junkers.

From this it was a short step to believing that the German ruling class, though very evil, was no worse than any other, and that the war which did not depose the ruling class everywhere was a disappointment, if not altogether a mistake. Regarding war as a horrible accident and an insult to their civilization, pro-

gressives could only make it tolerable by conceiving it as an opportunity for still more splendid progress.<sup>1</sup> So we had the War to End War, the war to make the world safe for Democracy, the war for small nationalities and the war for the imprisoned German soul.

The chances of a desperate war being used for the moral advancement of Mankind are never great and they disappear entirely if the war is prolonged. Under the grinding suffering and the brute oppression of the Materialschlacht bright hopefulness gave way to numb endurance, and to the disillusionment which was so well-advertised in the later war novels. Hope flared up again at the Armistice, but it was extinguished by the Treaty.

The Treaty of Versailles was a failure. All parties, though for differing reasons, agreed on the fact, and the outbreak of the present war made even agreement unnecessary. But what did the optimists expect? Did they imagine that nations would regard their ten million dead, on one side and the other, as items of loss which more or less cancelled out? Was it possible to let bygones be bygones when the material and human ruin caused by the war was the dominant fact of Europe? Did they think that the Party of Virtue which had melted to nothing in the heat of national feeling was any better able to withstand the nervous fears and exhaustion of the peace, the temporary excitement of victory and the slow-burning resentment of defeat? To men of progressive mentality, the Weimar Republic was a model state, the Frankfort municipality writ large, but to Clemenceau, Frankfort did not recall municipal memories. To him, Frankfort was the town of the last German treaty, where Alsace and Lorraine were torn from France. Europe may have looked on Wilson as a second Lincoln coming to bind up the nations' wounds; but the American detachment from European quarrels which was his greatest asset in the public eye was also his fatal handicap, for the American people recalled not Lincoln but Jefferson, and they said: 'No foreign entanglements.' Thus the League of Nations was born and died. Distrust of one European State for another had much to do with the failure, but American distrust of them all had even more.

<sup>1</sup> The old hypnotism has recovered its power since the German attack on Russia. A proletarian novelist has written to-day (26 October, 1942): 'War is a dirty and disagreeable business. But war can also anneal a nation into an unbreakable unity of flesh and spirit.' The old disenchantment will return shortly.

American isolationism may have been very disappointing, but progressives could hardly complain of what caused it, for the American decision to keep clear of the old world's troubles had enjoyed hearty progressive blessings in the past. At one time European progressives regarded American isolationism as a highly moral attitude, and Americans saw no reason why it should not be regarded as highly moral still. Plausible reason was perhaps for intervention in Europe, but instinct was against it, and instinct won, as usual. But the Treaty of Versailles was not a total failure for idealism. It was a partial and dangerous success.

It should have been remembered, but was readily forgotten, by the hostile critics of the Treaty, that many of the most debatable and remarkable clauses in the Treaty were not dictated by cynical power politics, but by high principle. The Polish Corridor, which cut Germany 'in two,' was denounced endlessly and heatedly by progressives so long as the Weimar Republic lasted; and the Poles, generally, came in for a bad time as a feudal and arrogant race. But the Corridor was the result of the clear application of a principle which was enthusiastically accepted by the common people of all the victorious nations and which also enjoyed progressive support. If there was any reality in self-determination, then the Poles had a right to the Corridor, however inconvenient it might prove for Germany. When progressives denounced the Corridor as a wound in the German nation they really meant, of course, that the industrious, ingenuous and intelligent Germans should not be put about for the benefit of a lot of semi-civilized Poles. Germany was a large, wealthy and important country and had a natural right to superior consideration.<sup>1</sup> That is what they thought. That is what Hitler thinks.

Opposition to the Treaty led to a most violent hostility against France. It was taken for granted that the attempt to establish a 'French hegemony' over Europe was either the result of pure pride and wickedness or else of a neurotic condition which demanded firm treatment. The most shocking misdeed of the French was the billeting of black soldiers on the Rhineland, and the fact that the French saw nothing shocking in it was taken as

<sup>1</sup> The case of Eupen-Malmèdy was even more striking. The fact that two small 'German' districts were attached to Belgium was regarded as a serious grievance and an insult. If two small Belgian districts had been attached to Germany, the Belgians would have been told, loftily, that they must not make a fuss about a trifle if they wanted to be regarded as 'good Europeans.'



a measure of their provincial self-sufficiency. Because they themselves had no race feeling, they would not admit that the Germans who did have strong race feelings had the right to have those feelings considered and that was felt to be very wrong of the French. It was an unforgivable insult to billet negroes in Germany, as if Germany was France.<sup>1</sup> So strong was public indignation that the *Week-End Review* found it necessary to remind its readers that France was really a highly civilized nation, in spite of its intolerable foreign policy.

The common people of Britain were less eager to accept the new Germany as a trustworthy friend. Indeed, at a time when German athletes were performing in Paris, it was still deemed dangerous to public order to allow them to appear in London. But pro-German propaganda was persistent, widespread and, in the end, almost universal. It prevailed at last. On the day when Ramsay MacDonald unseated J. R. Clynes for the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party, the pacifist, internationalist wing of the Party recorded a definitive victory. Labour men who had supported the war were afterwards overshadowed by those who had opposed it. Every Armistice Day, the Unknown Soldier was insulted in the progressive press with profuse lamentations on the futility of his sacrifice, and a new International sprang from the ready imaginations of the Left—the International of the common soldiers of all nations who had learned from their common misery the shape and purpose of their common foe. That foe was no other nation. It was Capital. To the working men of Britain who had precarious employment or none, and who had lived through the disappointment of the vainglorious hopes of shallow, progressive statesmen who could will the end but not the means, there was much that was plausible in the picture. They saw the boss-class of all countries hobnobbing together to keep the workers of all countries under the heel.

The progressive propaganda was so pervasive and so persuasive and so excellently tuned to Germany's argument and needs that it might have come from Germany itself. To a large extent it did. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was poor enough as a novel, but it had historical importance if only because of its enormous success. The picture of the German soldier sharing

<sup>1</sup> It did not seem to strike indignant people that German sensitiveness to black troops was a useful index to German brutality in Africa

a shellhole with a Frenchman was a highly successful piece of symbolism. To kill or not to kill? that was the question. The evil thing which drove to murder was not in the German, neither was it in the Frenchman. It was a common but inhuman law to which both were bound and against which both ineffectually rebelled. That law, seen in terms of the human dilemma, was the blind brutality of the purposeless Fate before which Mr. Bertrand Russell refuses to quail. Seen in economic terms, it was the appalling result of the greed and stupidity of the handful possessing money and power, who sacrificed the lives and befouled the ideals of the multitude to secure their own money and power. When the soldiers of all nations were regarded as the bond-slaves of an inhuman, impersonal power the War Guilt thesis melted away in a flood of warm emotionalism. One book after another pictured the soldiers of the opposing nations as common victims of one master. The dialectic of conflicting causes and beliefs was resolved in the synthesis of a common, unmerited suffering. The glib tongues of public talkers took up the theme, and the pictures lent it the blatancy of their simplification and emphasis. It is not to be thought that this propaganda was entirely agreeable, although it was very useful, to the Hitler mind. Hitler could not want Germans to think and feel in that international way, but it suited him very well that British and French and Americans should. *All Quiet* was banned by the Nazi Government, but when, on the eve of war, Hitler addressed his dangerous appeal to Daladier, as from one front-line soldier to another, asking him to avoid the horrors of war between common men, he had not forgotten that the French translation of *All Quiet* had sold very well. Nor was the translation without effect. While Germany tore the entrails out of Poland, all was quiet on the Western Front. But it is not on record that German soldiers felt any degree of mystical solidarity with their Polish fellow-sufferers.

As war was considered to be an indefensibly stupid business, there was no difficulty in convincing a great mass of people that it was conducted by indefensibly stupid leaders, and it was on the wave of the great campaign against the generals that Mr. Lloyd George began to return to progressive favour. So popular did he become that his intense unpopularity in Coalition days has been generally forgotten. His attack on the military mind was very ably conducted, but all those who read it should not omit to

read General Wavell's lectures which lay a healthy emphasis on the prosaic foundations of generalship and of all other serious work. Brilliant manœuvring is not only very enjoyable: it is also very easy. What is difficult is to do without sleep, to bear the nervous strain of almost intolerable decisions and to remember that a whole campaign may fall to ruin if the issue of bootlaces should fail to meet the demand. Sound health, an imperturbable mind and a patient devotion to detail are prerequisites of generalship, and, indeed, of all command. The man who combines these qualities with a ready invention, or even a ready acceptance, of new notions is not of a common type. Gallieni sent soldiers to the Marne in taxicabs. 'At any rate, the idea is new,' he said. So it was, and it was well worth trying, though there was perhaps a hint of ironical scepticism in his comment. Certainly it was said afterwards that the troops would have been in fighting order as soon, if not sooner, if they had gone on their feet.

Samuel Butler said that Life was like playing the violin in the Albert Hall and learning the instrument as you went along. The generals of the first Great War had to learn their instrument as they went along. The armies were greater masses than had ever been seen before, and motor transport, the machine gun, the aeroplane, gas, the tank were all new, or nearly new. Certainly the generals were conservative, but not because they were generals: because they were men of a trade. They valued the technique they were brought up in, and they tried to maintain the traditions and conditions of their youth, like good trade union officials fighting a demarcation dispute in a mass production factory. Mr. Lloyd George would not expect solicitors to abandon their prerogatives and condemn their painfully acquired skill suddenly and cheerfully, because conditions had changed. He would know that solicitors would be slow to change and would hope for a return to the old conditions. He could not allow the same human characteristic to soldiers; because he is a man of fancy, not of imagination.<sup>1</sup>

Great innovators are not often great executants, and the converse is also true. Shakespeare left the form and æsthetic of the

<sup>1</sup> At a demonstration of the earliest American gas anæsthetic given in London, a famous surgeon was present, but it did not strike him that the gas had any utility for surgery. The reason was simple. His fame rested on his marvellous speed—which an anæsthetic would have rendered pointless.

drama as he found it, in a very confused and unsatisfactory state. It was not Wordsworth who popularized the sonnet after its long eclipse, but a very feeble performer called Bowles. It was not Mendel who spread Mendelism. Mendel's obscure and humble work remained obscure and humble. Wellington was neither an innovator nor a friend of innovations. Napoleon was equally well satisfied with the instrument he had learned to use. Neither new tactics nor new weapons made much appeal to him. If Napoleon and Wellington had been faced with an enemy using superior weapons they would have changed by force of necessity ; but there is no evidence to show that they would have changed willingly or very rapidly, or with any zeal to change faster than the enemy.

The generals of the last war, even the British generals, did change in the end. The movement of change was slow and often unwieldy and the waste was appalling. But change is apt to be uncertain and costly in any large-scale organization. Ford did not abandon his Model T. until he had lost ground so badly that, if he had been a general he would have been compelled to ask for terms. The Civil Service is not notorious for its adaptability or resilience, and the Civil Service makes many mistakes for that reason. But the Civil Service does not admit its mistakes or suffer for them ; the Civil Service quite simply organizes its mistakes. Doctors proverbially bury their mistakes.

Generals cannot bury their mistakes. Rather, their dead rise up and accuse them. Every military error is a fatal error for someone. A degree of laxity, of thoughtless risk, of extravagant management will be forgiven in most undertakings, if success crowns the work : but not in the great undertaking of war, where losses are irreparable. Not even victory earned forgiveness for Passchendaele and the Somme. It was admitted that the closing battles of 1918 showed a very marked improvement, that the generals had at last begun to learn their bloody lesson ; but that fact counted for nothing against their former prejudices and mistakes, with their dreadful consequences. Yet their prejudices and, therefore, their mistakes were inevitable. A neat and lucid argument does not change a man's whole habit of mind or undo the effect of a lifetime's experience. If the generals were tragically slow in shedding their faults, they retained their virtues. The quick, purely intellectual judgement of the critics underrated the importance, and the rarity, of those virtues. Indeed the facile



conclusions which the critics did reach have proved to be disastrous guides for the present war. One of the first necessities of a good commander is the firmness of character to refuse to listen to facile critics.

With the conduct of the war, as with the conduct of the conference, there may have been room for sadness and a modest degree of disappointment; but there was no room for disillusionment; for disillusionment implies surprise. If the method of victory was discovered by improvisation and trial and repeated error, as in the American Civil War, at least the method was found, and the war was won. That was something, and a considerable something, too.

But the 'disillusioned' more and more inclined to the belief that it was nothing. The war had been technically won, but the cause was lost. The 'betrayed generation' had a great deal to say about its betrayal. According to popular legend, they, the youth of all the warring nations, had been sacrificed to the greedy Moloch of power politics and the machinations of the modern Metternichs and Talleyrands. Defeated in their quite unreasonable hope that war would settle everything, progressives collapsed into the despairing belief that it settles nothing. The unpleasantly neurotic atmosphere of the early post-war years gave a very unfortunate impetus to the typical modern tendency to reject all law, duty and obedience and to conceive life entirely in terms of personal satisfaction, and to disguise silly self-indulgence as wounded idealism.

There was always something rather suspicious about the widely publicized disillusionment of the trenches. Working men (and others) found unemployment a far greater hardship and an infinitely harder and more insidious moral trial than the trenches had been. On the other hand, men who returned to jobs and homes and all the private interests of ordinary life settled down with remarkable smoothness. The extraordinary degree of public order which marked the post-war strikes showed how firmly the texture of national peace had withstood the tear of international anarchy, and how far the bulk of the people were from any serious thoughts of revolutionary activity. The ordinary man left the indignation and the self-pity to the literary gents whose anger at being driven to kill their fellow-men was at last equalled by their anger at having to salute a superior officer.

The minority among serving soldiers who were frankly and

entirely wretched at all times during the war did not, as a rule, take a cosmic and tragic view of their own distress. They had not read *War and Peace*, nor yet *The Dynasts*, and they admitted that war was a fearful test, for which they were not quite strong enough in nerve or body. They had muddled through it, calling on courage to cancel infirmity, and they were very, very glad to get home again. But they did not wish to make long speeches on the harrowing of their souls and the blunting of their finer sensibilities. They did not want to talk about the war at all. They did not want to plan the United States of Everywhere. They were back to dear, familiar things, the garden, the pub and catching the train. They wanted no more. They were reactionaries.

Ex-soldiers, like everyone else, read the 'realistic' war novels when the great boom came. They recognized sights, sounds, places and experiences, recorded with more or less accuracy; but it was not they who were most deeply moved by echoes of the agony. The deepest self-pity, the most brittle cynicism was heard from youths whose most harrowing personal memories of the war concerned a shortage of spinning tops and sweets. The doomed generation who had gone through the fire of disillusion at second-hand in circulating libraries and the pictures were the most completely farcical figures of the long, inept and extravagant years of peace. There was the plucky young Modern Girl, frank, fearless and outspoken, who had freed herself from 'all the old taboos about sex' and had developed an extremely fearsome taboo about childbirth in their place. A bold young woman in a man-made world, she held herself free of all responsibility for the man-made war. She was, of course, the victim of Man's evil inheritance, and she proclaimed that there was much to be done before the world was fit for young women like herself to live in. But the future was bright with promise and with hope. Hope lay in the free and equal partnership of the young. Fit partner for the Modern Girl was the Contemporary Young Man. He had shown the mettle of heroes, while at school, by refusing to join the O.T.C. or the Baptist Choir. If the Modern Girl was victim of men, he was, in a more special sense, the victim of old men, who regarded him as cannon fodder. Age was the real enemy, not sex. If hope lay with the young, danger lay with the greed and callousness of the aged. The old men, it was frequently said, had forgotten the Shelley they

had read in their youth, and their minds were filled with blood. They had not the imagination nor the idealism to foresee the shape of things to come, and their hearts did not trouble them for the shadow they had cast on the lives of their children,<sup>1</sup> whose young hairs they had brought in sorrow to the grave.

For a number of years every school-leaving day added to the numbers of the theoretically betrayed generation. The activity and the prestige of this suffering community reached their height with the Oxford Union resolution and the election of Dick Sheppard as Lord Rector of Glasgow University. But, like many another 'movement,' the league of suffering youth had lost its dynamic force before it had reached its widest apparent influence. The menace of Hitlerism broke the unanimity of youthful counsels. The youths had to choose, among their principles, which they would stand by. The Spanish Civil War made warriors out of many a young pacifist, and others found a spiritual nursing home in the Oxford Group.

The pacifist attitude of the young was not surprising, for extreme youth is given to self-pity, disillusionment and romantic posturing. But the behaviour of the middle-aged and elderly who encouraged and, indeed, invented, the youthful legend was somewhat nauseous. Experience is apt to admire and envy youth for its vigour and cheerful confidence, but it cannot reasonably take youthful opinions with reverent seriousness. The elderly who made up to the cynical young men were at least as ridiculous as the elderly who, in all generations, make up to young girls: and their reward was not much greater. The youth who was a pacifist at eighteen and a Communist at nineteen was very likely in the Air Force at twenty. The progress was very natural, but it was rather difficult for the elderly admirer to follow.

But, indeed, the pacifism of adult progressives was as shallow as the pacifism of youth, and in a manner more difficult to forgive. The comfortable and established men who shuddered at the bloodshed and cruelty of war accepted the bloodshed and cruelty of revolution with an unimaginative callousness which would be

<sup>1</sup> This claptrap continues. A lady, writing in the *Spectator*, said: 'We must always remember that it is the old who fail the young and not the reverse.' If she had ever stopped to adjust her sentimentalities to her personal experience, she would have recognized that almost the bitterest and most hopeless tragedies of all are the tragedies of parents with bad children. But such large statements as the one quoted have no relation to any reality. They are bits out of Shelley.

impossible to understand if the progressive mind was governed by principles, and can only be explained at all, and by no means forgiven, by the fact that that mind is governed by an inheritance of contradictory and unexamined sentimentalities. Progress as a successful and self-confident affair began with the guillotine. When there was a revolution to be welcomed, the progressive became a realist.

That cognomen sounded best  
Considering what wild infancy  
Drove horror from his mother's breast

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE RED DAWN

**P**ROGRESSIVES who found the European battlefield a scene of desolation void of light were cheered by the great glow from the East. The Russian Revolution was not only a revelation: it was also a relief. Even in their first enthusiasm for the war, they had been embarrassed by the Russian alliance: for Russia was then a land of almost unmitigated darkness, and it was impossible to deny that on the Eastern Front, barbarism was inconveniently on the side of Right and civilization on the side of Might. The truth of this judgement may now be doubted, but no right-thinking person dreamt of denying it, at the time.

British Liberals had a particular affection for young Russian idealists who struggled for Liberty, Freedom and Enfranchisement by means of privately manufactured bombs, and it was held to be impossible to say anything good of the Russian state organization. A crude and infamously splendid Court, an extravagant, incompetent and effete aristocracy, a vulgarly opulent merchant class and an incompetent and corrupt Civil Service battered on the toiling masses of the great cities and on the brutalized and superstitious serfs of the great estates. Special aversion was felt for the Russian Church, which wallowed in idolatry, servility and greed. In view of the massive and varied enormities which surrounded them, it was felt that the Russian clerks, the lawyers, students and professors would have a long and weary task in bringing enlightenment and liberty to the



and slavery of the steppes. The Revolution sent hopes bounding with all the exhilaration of dreams come suddenly and richly true. Many a progressive said that the war was worth while if it freed the Russian serf. Enthusiasm for the Revolution was understandable among those who did not make peace an absolute, however much they desired it. But many progressives did make it an absolute. They said war settled nothing, that violence always defeated itself, that the taking of human life left a stain on any cause. The number who believed this increased every year the war lasted and for many years afterwards, but the number who gave their loyalty to the Revolution did not diminish. Two contradictory absolutes were held simultaneously.

They were contradictory, for a revolution is not a peaceful process or a mere demonstration of high ideals. It is a very bad species of war. It is war at its worst, the kind of war that is most barbarous, most bitter, most unscrupulous, that leaves the deepest wounds and most enduring hatreds. In a climax of barbarity there is war, civil war, and revolution. Yet the peace-loving idealists who wept copious tears over Englishmen or Frenchmen killing their German brothers gave loud cheers to see Russians killing their Russian brothers, perhaps their brothers of the body. The contradiction was, and is, an ugly thing to see. It sprang from a deep mire of sentimentality, and an equally deep lack of authentic pity.

Progressives have an inferiority complex towards revolution and are therefore unable to be critical. They cannot forget how many advanced men turned faint-hearted and deserted the great cause of the French Revolution, to their eternal disgrace; for, if there is one thing more certain than another to the progressive mind, it is the gloriousness of the French Revolution. The story of the desertion of that great cause is nicely simplified and distorted in the progressive mind.

When the Bastille fell, cobwebs trembled all over Europe and an active and exhilarating spirit was released. It was a mean-spirited and reactionary wretch who cavilled at the treachery and murder which marked the glorious occasion. All the best elements were for the great new movement. Horace Walpole and his like were hostile from the start, but they were notoriously the representatives of the hollow and selfish society of privilege and pleasure which was being broken; so their indignation was at once pathetic and laughable. It was not to be expected that such

men, devoid of all idealism and vision, would see the greatness of the event. Unfortunately, the later excesses of the Revolution and the obscurantist eloquence of Burke tempted many better men to shrink back into a timid and unimaginative Toryism, repenting their former daring.

Most notable of the renegades was Wordsworth. He had hymned the splendours of the new day when it dawned, but he was intimidated by the inevitable storm. That was the charitable view of his later delinquency. Severer critics hold that he was bought by flattery and honours, or else that he merely sank back into his fundamental pomposity and frigid self-conceit.

The beauty of this simple view of complicated happenings is that it enables us to dismiss the dark and bloody side of the Revolution as a passing phase, an irrelevance, an atrocity story, more or less exaggerated and certainly employed for base ends. We have been educated to believe that it is folly, if not dishonesty, to pay much attention to the incidental horrors of violent but eminently constructive days when resolutions of the highest moral quality were passed by legislators who could not even save their own lives. To be pressed on such matters merely irritates an enthusiast. He will hastily regret unfortunate incidents, but will indicate that they are inevitable concomitants of a famous victory. He will ransack the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms for happy parallels. Revolutions, he will tell you, are human earthquakes, or tidal waves, or tornadoes; they are a sudden release of brakes, a sudden letting off of steam, a sudden explosion of slowly gathered and enormous energies. You can't make omelets without breaking eggs; you can't make revolutions with rose-water.

These aphorisms are true, but pointless. Revolutions are not made with rose-water. Neither are they made with the natural forces of wind or water or subterranean disturbances. They are made with the will of human beings, a fact which reduces all the smug mechanical analogies to complete irrelevance. Because a revolution is a human affair, it will be marred by outbursts of malice and rage, too sudden, perhaps, to be checked at once; and these may justly be called inevitable. But the crimes of the Revolution were not all the excesses of hysteria; many were the deliberately conceived and deliberately pursued policy of unrelenting malevolence, others of a pompous and priggish inhumanity. And the evil that men do lives after them. French

politics still carry the poison of that evil, not always obviously. The obviously invigorating results of the Revolution, some good, some bad, are plain to be seen. The progressive clerks regard them all as good, and rightly consider them to be their own special inheritance. But there have been other results, more subtly shown. The evil unexpiated has corrupted judgement and reduced the most self-consciously noble and tender humanitarianism to the level of hypocrisy and cant. The evil was as real as the good. That evil survived in Belfort Bax, to name only one. Among the things you do not notice, if you wear rose-tinted spectacles, is blood. The fact that the Assembly voted against their conscience and judgement, on serious matters, under the threat of the massacre of their wives and children, he called 'a little judicious coercion.' Of Marat he said that his 'single mindedness and absolute self-sacrifice are almost unique in history,' and that he was 'the first great vindicator of the rights of the modern Proletariat, a truly single-minded champion of the oppressed.' The abominable end of the Princesse de Lamballe furnished him with an opportunity to exercise a vein of humour that would have delighted Marat himself. He called Marie-Antoinette 'an obscene abortion . . . the like of which, let us hope, may never be seen again.' To humbler victims he conceded a pity that was not perceptibly more generous or more warm.

Of course, it took an International Socialist, a true friend of brotherhood and love, to reach the Bax level of bumptious brutality. A more popular and less obviously revolting method of dealing with the difficulty created by undeniable cruelty is to make a perfunctory admission of human imperfection and then hastily change the talk to some more agreeable subject, such as the comparable, if not greater, horrors perpetrated by the capitalist class. There also is continuing comfort and support in the accepted wrong-headedness of Walpole and Wordsworth, who regretted the regrettable too violently, and quite failed to see the wood for the gallows trees. They were upset by atrocities, and they were notoriously wrong.

But Walpole's judgements were not all self-evidently silly. He was not an admirer of the *ancien régime*. Indeed, his view of the superiority of the constitutional (British) monarchy to the absolute (French) monarchy was not far removed from Voltaire's. Further, he did see some good in the Revolution. In the true spirit of a modern progressive he hoped that foreign massacre



would secure dividends in liberty for the fortunate isle in which he lived. British Kings would be deterred from encroachments by the French example, and British stocks would rise.

But, at the same time, he thought the French were paying too dear for such benefits as they might obtain for themselves. 'How dearly will even liberty be bought (which I neither think it is nor will be) by every kind of injustice and violation of consciences.' He thought also that the eloquent gentlemen of the Gironde who made speeches about the Rights of Man would not control the destinies of France with much decision or for very long. He called them 'praters' and said they had unchained mastiffs which would chew them up. Events did not give him the lie.

If there was a good deal to be said for Walpole, there was still more to be said for Wordsworth. He showed none of the older man's panic and hysteria. The incidental barbarity of the Revolution horrified him, but he recognized that it was inevitable. He was shaken when Louvet, denouncing Robespierre, found not one of the legislators of liberty to support him, though he was speaking their mind; he saw slavery in that silence, not freedom. Nevertheless he hoped and believed that the spirit of liberty and its defenders would overcome the force of the passions of the worst sort of men. He abandoned the Revolution when the Revolution abandoned itself, and not before. Indeed, if he found reason to reproach himself it was for continuing to profess faith in the worth of the Republic after his faith had been fatally weakened and shaken.

There was, of course, more in the Revolution than Wordsworth was able to see steadily or Walpole was ready to see at all; but if they and their like were perhaps too close to the present horrors of the time to make a satisfactory final judgement, the comfortable liberals who have since written them down as entirely wrong are considerably too far away. They talk like Mr. Podsnap. Mr. Podsnap was well-to-do, and stood very high in Mr. Podsnap's opinion. The sedentary gentlemen who pooh-pooh atrocities committed for the right cause at a safe distance in space and time are indeed very like him. Like him, they had come into a good inheritance, and, like him, they look everywhere for evidences of the British Constitution. But Mr. Podsnap looked at home; they looked abroad, and everywhere where the French Armies had marched they found happy signs of liberal government, or at least of an ambitious liberal class.



It is not clear to-day that the results of the French Revolution were invariably beneficial or entirely healthy for France, let alone other countries; but this is undoubtedly true, that it did create, or assist powerfully in creating, a world in which liberal gentlemen could write their little pamphlets in peace and honour; and there are few indications that the new revolutionary movements which the liberal gentlemen now support will yield so pretty a result.

Callousness to injustice and suffering was held to be quite permissible because of the lapse of time. The evil, it was felt, was momentary and had passed away; the good remained for eternity. This happened to be untrue, but in the happy days of the liberal Podsnap prosperity it looked as if it might be true, and it was a comforting thought. But the Russian Revolution revived the issue, red and raw. One had to swallow atrocities of the moment, to condone evil not yet done—or be like Horace Walpole.

Immediately the Horace Walpoles gave tongue. They stressed the cruelty, the bloodshed and the hatred, often with wild exaggeration, but with small effect in liberal circles. Progress was not to be caught napping a second time. It was at once decided by truly broad-minded people that things must be seen in proportion, the inevitable must be allowed for, and the young Socialist idealists of Russia, who were more distressed than anyone by the punishment which the bourgeoisie had brought on themselves, must be assured of generous and understanding progressive support. That support was enthusiastically given. Mention of bloody deeds did not so much bring denial as simple anger. 'I don't want to know about it,' said Mr. Podsnap. 'I don't choose to discuss it: I don't admit it.' His descendant had perfected the classic technique of 'clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him (and consequently sheer away) with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him.'

Unpleasant realities affronted the progressives. They were determined that they would not be misled by superficial phenomena into misjudging the great and majestic event. In Russia, inevitable turbulence gave way to organized, cold-blooded terror, but still Mr. Podsnap waved his angry arm. The Kronstadt sailors were liquidated. That was regrettable perhaps, but it was only one of those sad incidents which must be expected in any

famous victory. Only a few doctrinaires made a matter of principle out of a trifle. Dictatorship of the proletariat crystallized disappointingly into dictatorship of a central committee. That was more serious, but there remained the Internationale, nursery schools, abortion hospitals, instantaneous divorce and sex equality to cheer the heart of the enthusiast.

The attitude of tolerance was not becoming to those who adopted it. A grim and brutal acceptance of hard facts would have been tolerable in men of grim and brutal realism; but the enthusiasts for the Russian Revolution were, in the majority, men who professed a horror of bloodshed for any cause. The course of the Revolution unwound itself in the years when criticism of the conduct of the war reached its formidable height. The General Staff was denounced with sick anger and disgust for obstinacy and extravagant tactics, for indifference to suffering, for unnecessary prolongation of a physically savage and a morally degrading slaughter. Yet the men who pressed this charge with the most nervous intensity were largely the men who found any excuse sufficient for the crimes, similar in kind but enormously greater in degree, that were committed by the revolutionary committee. The Five Year Plan was an economic Passchendaele—and it lasted five years. It was possible for the organizers of the plan to ignore the suffering in the substantial results; but that ruthless attitude was intolerable in those who raised a scream over every life lost in the war through careless staffwork or unimaginative strategy. The famine in the Ukraine was tragedy on a colossal scale. Yet men who ‘exposed’ conditions in Kenya or Jamaica with burning indignation and an angry rejection of all excuses were content to explain it away. They had denounced the continuance of the blockade against Germany after the Armistice as an infamy not to be forgiven; but in the Ukraine, far more widely than in Germany, women and children were starved through policy, and they called it strong and realistic rule. The Ukraine was, in fact, the classic scene of oppression. There you had the poor, struggling impotently against remote authority pursuing grandiose schemes; you had the local agents of tyranny and the secret police; you had death decreed from afar and *les grands cimetières sous la lune*.

But the progressive tourist, carefully carrying his indigestion tablets and a change of socks from one kholkoz to another, was not unduly disturbed. He assured himself that a virile govern-

ment could not afford to cater for nervous sensibilities, that stern times demanded stern measures, that the weak obstinacy of a few could not be allowed to blight the unfolding future for the many, that great sufferings were well repaid by great gains. The Russian rulers were praised for their strong nerves, the peasantry were posthumously reproved. They kept a firm grip on themselves, did the progressives. They told themselves that they must on no account lose their heads or give way to a womanish pity which might tempt them to imitate the sin of their progressive forefathers who had betrayed the French Revolution in an access of hysteria. To worry too much about the iron logic of iron times was as dangerous as getting your feet wet. They were quite fussy about avoiding both dangers.

Of course, there were Wordsworths who did withdraw their support for the great experiment in multiplex democracy, and among these were men who had seen the thing at too close quarters and for too long. There was a greater number who were not entirely comfortable about the trend of affairs, men who wished that conditions were not quite so bad as they patently were, who admitted that there was something rather inhuman and not entirely democratic about Russian methods—but who made those admissions reluctantly and then quitted the subject with what was, strictly, indecent haste. They were the men who said: 'I hold no brief for Russia, but——' With such men you could be sure of one thing, not with the moral certainty that the sun will rise to-morrow, but with the absolute certainty that it rose yesterday: they held a brief for Russia.

Apologies for the conduct of the Russian Government would have been unworthy in anyone who pretended to maintain the natural dignity and rights of Man, and they were doubly unworthy in fervid enthusiasts for every manner of political, economic and personal freedom at home. They still burned with anger for the Tolpuddle Martyrs, they 'stood up' for the rights of the *Daily Worker*, they cried persecution if the police took notes at a Communist meeting, they signed countless letters of protest against every infringement of the liberty of the subject, and they denounced the Means Test as fiercely as they denounced the Inquisition. They had thunder for what were, at worst, the very minor sins of the British Government, but only a gentle shower of tears for the enormous errors of the Soviet. Communism might steal the horse, while Capitalism met with yells of



abuse if there was reason to suspect that it might be thinking of taking steps which would lead it, in time, to a position from which it would be able to look over the hedge.<sup>1</sup> This double standard of political morality may have been convenient to the Soviet, but it was highly unflattering to the Russian people. If progressives were willing to approve the destruction of their principles in Russia, it looked as if the progressives had no sincere belief in their principles, or else as if they regarded the unfortunate Russians as guinea pigs, fit only to suffer and die under political vivisection, and not worthy of the rights which every Briton must enjoy.

It was, in fact, not so bad as that. Progressives suffered, and still suffer, from a multiplex sentimentality. In home affairs they feel that nothing is so important as political liberty, free speech, free assembly, and a universal and equal franchise. Any restriction of these sacred institutions is considered fatal to civilization. But in foreign affairs they respond to a different tune, the tune of the class war, and heads rolling to save the republic. They might, indeed, reconcile their inconsistency by arguing that the highly developed British civilization has advanced beyond the necessity for the solution by blood and tyranny, but that they are not at all inclined to do. They award the palm of superiority to the revolutionary despotism, while they call it sacrilege if anyone proposes to attain the same results by a shadow of the same means. They are content to hold opposite principles simultaneously because they do not base their attitude on thought but on feeling. It is quite easy to nurse contradictory emotional reactions, but it is dangerous; for emotional people can be very callous. In face of the great Russian tragedy and experiment, the progressives fed themselves with self-delusion, more or less complete. Barbusse, who said that the sufferings of the Great War convinced him of the absence of God, was less sensitive to blots on the Russian scene. He saw some young Russians walking together and chattering happily. He had no knowledge of what they were talking about, but he surmised

<sup>1</sup> Mr. William Gallacher told the Commons that the government of Northern Ireland was intolerable because it was a one-party government. When this statement roused laughter, he explained that in a State where power lay with one class, he did not object to the party of that class having the major influence: but the population of Northern Ireland was mixed, and therefore one-party government was wrong. This was surely a very rambling way of explaining that one-party government is right, when the one party is Communist.



that very likely they were discussing, with much enthusiasm, the splendid work of the OGPU.

*Nous avons cru en trop de choses  
Nous les hommes de peu de foi.*

But with Barbusse and his like, as with Belfort Bax and his like, there was more than an intellectual error. Poison in the head had reached the heart. The progressives failed in the virtue which is a first necessity for all men, and which they claimed supremely for themselves; they failed in charity.

It was not surprising that the eclipse of Trotsky and the subsequent purge of his supporters and other dissidents did more to damage the foreign reputation of the Soviet than their larger and grimmer activities in the art of liquidation. The clerks of all the world are by temperament Trotskyists. Trotsky was more or less an educated man, he was a true Internationalist, and, most important, he was a journalist. He could write rings round Stalin, just as Mr. Lloyd George could write rings round the generals. So superior was Trotsky in the clerkly talents that it was possible for a highbrow Socialist to feel a kind of pity for Stalin. He was the rough diamond of the Revolution, unpolished, uncultured, unlearned, untravelled. Trotsky, on the other hand, had a scintillating wit, wide experience of men and cities, encyclopedic bigotries and a sensitive command of the intolerable jargon of Marxian controversy. In view of Trotsky's most evident superiorities, progressives must have been puzzled to discover why, at the end of the struggle, Stalin should have been sitting back in the Kremlin, while Trotsky was winning paper victories in Turkey and Mexico. According to clerkly form Trotsky should have dominated Stalin, but Stalin dominated Trotsky. The fact was uncomfortable, but the fact, and its implications, were undeniable. The historic is the real.

The expulsion of Trotsky was symbolic of changes in Russia which the progressive enthusiast had to call sadly reactionary. Abortion and divorce were hedged in with difficulties, and there was propaganda in favour of family life. Liberty of speech was more and more firmly controlled, till at last it obviously ceased to exist. A coarsely utilitarian examination system was imposed on the free, experimental schools. A Gradgrind morality began to weigh the spirit down, and there was a shocking tendency to glorify such hoary ogres as Peter the Great.

The publication of the Draft Constitution refreshed many a wilting heart. 'Since ancient times,' wrote Mr. Priestley, 'there has existed the dream of an ideal state in which science and art will be at the height of honour and indissolubly fused with life. What happiness to live until this dream has become a reality.' We seem to have heard those sentiments before. 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,' but to be young was very necessary. Wordsworth, a weaker spirit than Mr. Priestley, found it difficult to find much happiness in the contemplation of Napoleon. Mr. Priestley was happier in his faith, but less observant; for, in sordid fact, science and art, as Mr. Priestley understands them, had taken a back seat long before the Draft Constitution appeared. A Russian artist might, or might not, be highly paid, but he was not as useful to the struggling State as a man who was handy with pigs or had learned about manures in America. Not all progressives were as simply delighted as Mr. Priestley. 'It is often asked,' wrote a gentleman called Rust commenting on the Constitution, 'how there can be democracy in the Soviet Union when only one party, the Communist Party, is legal? Those who are troubled by this question should ask themselves what the role of another Party would be?' Unfortunately for Mr. Rust, that is exactly what many progressives were asking, and they must have found his *naïveté* a little trying.

However, if the Draft Constitution was not altogether convincing, it was at least consoling as evidence of a better day to come. Men in love are easily deceived, and the progressive attitude towards Russia was love of a most particular fatuity. It was the love of a rather elderly and done gentleman of refined tastes for a crudely healthy and vigorous young female who hardly understood the meaning of the tired phrases he used. Fascinated by her vitality and shocked by her behaviour, the progressive of the rather worn-out views tried very hard to identify her character and interests with his own. But the female made only the most fitful and half-hearted attempts to support the illusion, the Draft Constitution being one of them. She was constantly playing some outrageous trick that caused him acute distress and much mental worrying to find a plausible excuse and explanation. But the doxy did not care. Why should she? If he could be happy neither with her nor without her, she could be perfectly content without him. The first approaches and the healing of quarrels were all the work of the elderly gentleman.

It would be interesting to know what the Kremlin really thought of its liberal admirers. The admiration of the world's workers was fully comprehensible. For the workers it was enough that the mighty had been put down from their seats. But the others, the clerkly type, were the very people who, in Russia, formed the cheapest material for demonstration trials and jumped first and farthest to the crack of the whip. They were ideology's own murderers, with this much sense that very few of the foreign visitors gave up their passports, which saved their skins and their illusions.

There were dark days after the outbreak of war and the signing of the Russo-German pact when even the heaping of all the blame on British policy still left it necessary to admit that if Russia's behaviour was fully comprehensible, natural and forgivable, it was nevertheless unfortunate. Yet, right up to the launching of Hitler's attack, the overwhelming majority of progressives kept a soft spot in their heads for Russia. The attack permitted them to be unrestrainedly enthusiastic. On the surface the Russian War was all balm for the progressive soul. Once more the tints of glad confident morning gilded the Eastern sky. But it was a false dawn, and the more intelligent progressives knew it. Under the froth of enthusiasm and hysteria, the disillusioning forces of Russian nationalism and economic reaction were not retarded, much less reversed; but were gathering force and speed for an end which shall appear.

Misjudgement of the Russian situation was a serious error, with serious results already evident or nearly so. But misjudgement of the German situation had even worse results. That misjudgement was in the opposite sense. Because the great Russian upheaval was obviously a revolution, it must, in the progressive view, be a Good Thing. Because the German upheaval was a Bad Thing, it could not be a revolution. Hitler was described as a preposterous person. He was completely uneducated. His ideas were on the witchcraft level. He was a blustering windbag. His economics were farcical, his military notions puerile. He was the tool of the capitalist, of the Junkers, of the military caste. His inchoate movement was a temporary product of hardship and hysteria. He would never get to power—not with those followers and that moustache. If he did, responsibility would soon sober him, the Nationalists and the Centre Party would wind him round with silken threads and he



would become a stodgy and rather pathetic figurehead for the cultivated and educated men who understood the science of government. These judgements were nearly axiomatic.

He got into power, and the great proletarian movement, including the formidable Communist Party, collapsed at once, like an old deck chair. But there was consolation left. His power was perhaps nominal. Von Papen was Vice-Chancellor, a smiling, polished caretaker for the permanent German things—bad things, but still things which a clerk could understand. Then there was Schleicher, the Social General, a man of real ability and spokesman of the all-powerful Army. Schleicher died suddenly one day; he just knew what hit him. Papen began to travel. He went, like Trotsky, to Turkey. The underground movement of the workers and the background movement of the capitalist were gradually shown to be equally ineffective, if they existed at all. The belief that the German people was cowed, hungry and discontented was severely shaken by the Saar plebiscite when the Germans who lived outside the ring of terror almost unanimously voted themselves in. Progressives began to think really badly of the German people.

It was considered a grievous and astonishing thing that the most highly educated and, in many respects, the most progressive nation in Europe should become the helots of sadistic drug-takers, perverts, barbaric gluttons and buffoons. It seemed incredible that the thing could last, for the Nazis were men of the Dark Ages and worshipped forest gods, and this was the twentieth century. That these men were at once the victims of the most ancient lusts and the masters of the most modern techniques was a painful paradox for all who believed that technique was virtuous and potent in itself. But the brutal fact became increasingly more difficult to ignore. M. Leon Blum had once proposed that France should win immortal glory for herself by being the first nation to disarm totally and without condition or parley. This gesture, he said, would create such a moral commotion that even the dictator countries would have to follow. When he came into power he did not attempt to press this sublime project; by that time, it was all too plain that the dictators did not understand the language of the heart.

Yet the illusion died very hard. Who has forgotten the famous breakdown of the German military machine invading Austria? That was very gratifying to the stalwarts who wanted



to call Hitler's bluff, after he had stopped bluffing. At the seizure of Prague, needless to say, the tanks broke down again, and the Czechs offered carrots to these laughable contraptions. Also the German industrial and economic system was staggering from one crisis to another. They put guns before butter. That was bad business, as well as bad morals. We, said Mr. Anthony Eden in tones of moral superiority, prefer butter to guns; for you can't eat guns. But, strangely, the Germans had thought of that, and it would have weighed with them if they had been starting a dairy; but they were preparing for a war. Law, said Mr. Laski, is fundamentally politics, and politics is fundamentally economics. No doubt he thought that was a bold and searching analysis; but, being the very archetype of all modern clerks, he stopped at economics. The Germans took the argument a step further. All economics, they said, is fundamentally force: if you have butter and I have a gun, I will point my gun at you and take your butter: then I will have both. The point became clear with the invasion of Denmark. When war came, the dæmonic force and fury of the German rising at last compelled conviction in the most unwilling. The earth shook as it had not since Napoleon died. Dr. Dalton, in a speech of querulous self-righteousness, said that none of these evil things would have happened if the world had only followed the policy and principles of his right worthy master, Arthur Henderson; but there were not many of his audience who were fully satisfied that salvation had lain with that dull old man. Mr. W. J. Brown broke the bad news to the progressive public. The Nazi movement, he said, was genuinely a revolution. In words of one and two syllables he made it patently clear that this was a most extraordinary discovery, for all previous revolutions had contained the germs of good, while this was entirely evil. It was a monstrous birth, hideous and unnatural, but it had to be understood to be effectively met. Mr. Brown could not very well say forewarned is forearmed; for, thanks in large degree to the force of progressive sentiment, Hitler was already master of Warsaw, Paris, Brussels, Oslo, Copenhagen and the Hague, and, in Britain, guns and butter were in equally short supply.

The lights of Europe had gone out again.

## CHAPTER SIX

LIBERTY

THE disastrous progressive misjudgements on German and Russian affairs were inevitable ; they sprang from the fatal misconceptions of the progressive mind, a mind which is resentful of all restraint, all duty and all law. A duty imposed from outside does more than limit the activity of the mind ; it casts a doubt on the validity of the mind's conclusions, it suggests that the general sense of society is more likely to be right than the idiosyncrasy of private persons. Thus the exercise of authority always rouses anger, whereas the manifest errors and eccentricities of individual whim are sure of indulgence ; the indulgence which we grant to others, hoping to have it returned. 'The right divine of kings to govern wrong' is repeated with fine scorn, while 'The people have the right to make their own mistakes' is whispered with reverence ; though it means, precisely, that the people have the right to govern wrong. (It was decided some years ago in Britain that kings have not the right to make their own mistakes.)

The Russian Revolution appeared to be a surge of freedom because it encouraged anarchy in personal life. Freedom of thought died very rapidly, and freedom of conduct withered soon after, but at least the Revolution had started on the right foot, and it preserved an air of moral anarchy, long after the reality had been liquidated. Next to the mummy of Lenin, the abortaria were the most popular sight for tourists, for they signified the denial of responsibility. It was happy enough that the two great attractions in the city of the nobler and fuller life should be a shambles and a tomb.

'We must be free or die,' said Wordsworth. 'I only ask to be free,' said Dickens's Mr. Harold Skimpole, tuning his lighter note. 'The butterflies are free. Mankind will surely not deny to Harold Skimpole what it concedes to the butterfly?' Mr. H. L. Mencken, a stout old progressive Tory, threw duty to the baser, docile breeds. 'For the man who differs from this inert and well-regimented mass, however slightly, there are no duties *per se*. What he is spontaneously inclined to do is of vastly more value to all of us than what the majority is willing to do. There is,

indeed, no such thing as duty-in-itself; it is a mere chimera of ethical theorists. Human progress is furthered, not by conformity, but by aberration.' The whole essence of the progressive heresy, with its blindness to the continual danger of human regress, is in that last sentence.

There is an obvious declension from Wordsworth, through Mr. Skimpole to Mr. Mencken. Wordsworth based his claim to freedom on the faith and morals of Milton. Mr. Skimpole asked for no more than the irresponsibility of an insect. That was bad enough, but it took a really modern man to write a testimonial for the Marquis de Sade. People who think like Mr. Mencken can count no one as an enemy who is against the established order. That is one of the reasons why the *New Statesman* was unable to accept the implications of its own stand on the war. Those who decided that Hitler must be resisted by force of arms stood on one side of a gulf, and those who decided otherwise stood on the other. In the most momentous possible division into 'They' and 'Us,' a decision which cut below all practical judgments to the conception of what Man is and must be, the *New Statesman* stood on one side and the conscientious objector on the other. But the *New Statesman* was unhappy in its stand. *Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore*. In its comments on the work of Conscientious Objectors' Tribunals, the *New Statesman* showed that, for them, the objectors were 'Us,' and the judges were 'They.' A hint, a suspicion, a mere allegation of hectoring or of coercion raised the ready indignation of that paper (which, by the way, was unable to 'make up its mind' on the Russian demonstration trials); but the wanton abuse of the procedure of the courts by men with coached and manufactured consciences, egotistical to the height of insolence and (sometimes) of insanity, caused no indignation or protest. An objector who appeared before a Scottish tribunal announced that he owed no duty to anybody, and that if he came across a man lying wounded in the street, through enemy action, he would let him lie. Enquiry exposed the fact that his job was the job of a full-time, paid A.R.P. warden. The *New Statesman*, and all the people it too truly represents, can find no censure in their hearts for such a man. They may say he is wrong in particular judgment, but they cannot deny his right to be a law unto himself. At the height of the German drive from Rostov to the oil fields, when the *New Statesman* was howling for a Second Front, it

could still find room for an advertisement asking for volunteers to share the pacifist life in the country with the advertiser and a Siamese cat.

What unites the conscientious objector and the *New Statesman* is a bond of common mood and sentiment. Neither wishes to accept duty from without. It is the same bond which unites Macaulay, who rejected paternalism, and Professor Levy, who rejoices in it. The temper of both minds is against subjection to intellectual or other authority. It was a hard revolt against that mood that made the Nazi Revolution appear to be something other than a revolution to the progressive mind. It was a revolution against moral and intellectual anarchy, not for them; it imposed duties and obediences with an iron will and an iron hand. It circumscribed female activities, it reviewed books by the bonfire, it wiped out government by discussion. According to the best theory, the structure must have been rickety, for the strength of freedom was not in it. In other words, it did not take lessons from the clerks. It was therefore bound to fail. The Germans did not believe that theory, and the clerks did not quite believe it either. That is why they asserted it so loudly.

The attitude of hostility to the law of the land, so common among progressives, is strengthened by memories of out-of-date and now pointless sentiments; as most progressive attitudes are. Undoubtedly, there was a time when the law was enormously harsh, and it was the duty of all humane, intelligent men to mitigate its rigours. But the men who fought the harshness of the law did not fight the law. In those days people did not invite unreformed criminals to parties, or read their published reflections on morality with more or less respect, or accept their condemnations of prison discipline without bothering much what the warders had to say. The day of 'revelations' by moral imbeciles had not yet dawned. Howard did good work in his day, reforming the harsh stupidity of his age; and the Howard League of Prison Reform may also be doing good work in our day. But it is mischievous sentimentality to imagine that it is doing the same work. The original prison reformers believed that prisoners, no less than prisons, were in need of reform. It is only in modern times that the criminal has been accepted as a person who has a special contribution to make to social thought. When the prisoners of Dartmoor broke loose and burned down the central block of their jail, the *Week-End Review* recorded with pride that



the signal for the rising was a cry: 'Throw the porridge in their faces.' This the *Week-End Review* chose to regard as an exceptionally humorous call, and one of a deep geniality that could not be found, in similar circumstances, in any other country in the world. Our criminals, like our policemen, were the finest in the world. A progressive doctor, writing on crime and punishment, quoted a conversation he had had with an interesting young acquaintance who was in prison for 'playing biological tricks' on a girl: it seems evident that he was guilty of rape. He thought his views were worth recording. But, it is permissible to wonder what were the views of the Dartmoor warders who were the target for the porridge and of the girl who was the victim of the biological trickster.

The law became milder as the law became more effective. It was not accidental that Peel, who reformed the criminal code, also established an efficient police. The case is altered since Calas, who was overwhelmed by the established prestige and the power of French eighteenth-century law, and even since Dreyfus. But, though the case is altered, the argument remains the same. We still think of persons being victims of arrogant law, though law is more often the victim of arrogant persons. Excitement still rises to the height of passion at the prospect of innocence being punished, while the certainty of guilt going unpunished rouses no more than a casual comment. The Sacco-Vanzetti trial raised excitement over half the world; but that excitement disguised the most striking weakness of American justice; which is not that innocent men are in great danger of being executed, but that known murderers are in very little danger of that fate. Lawyers succeeded in postponing the execution of two presumably innocent men. (I say 'presumably,' because, like ninety-nine point nine per cent of those who swore to that innocence, I have not sufficient knowledge for making a positive assertion.) The fact that ingenuity could find so many devices for the postponement of an injustice seemed to show that the same devices, or some of them, could be used, and would be used, to postpone and baffle justice. The exposure of the weakness of the law was very clear, but progressives were entirely uninterested in that aspect of the case. They never have any interest in justice, but only in injustice. When they say '*J'Accuse*,' they invariably point their finger at the bench.

When occasion arises, it is necessary to protest against a harsh

and overbearing legal system, for we all have an interest in personal freedom. But it is also necessary to protest against a weak and futile administration of the law when weakness and futility become evident, for we all have a personal interest in security. This necessity never appeals to progressives, for it is a progressive assumption that our very modern and very local security is a universal and permanent state of affairs. Mr. W. B. Curry, author of *The Case for Federal Union*, proudly quotes the instance of a man who was wrongfully arrested on suspicion of stealing an overcoat in Knightsbridge. He was awarded damages, and the Lord Chief Justice spoke in very severe terms to the police who arrested him. Very nice, too. But Mr. Curry goes on to contrast this little affair with Hitler's statement regarding the purge of June 30. 'On that night I was the Supreme Court of the German people.'

Mr. Curry is disturbed by this statement, and not without reason. It is undoubtedly very sad when the supreme law of any country is the will of a single man; but it is rather too large an assumption that conditions in Germany on 'the night of the long knives' bore a very cogent resemblance to conditions in Knightsbridge on a peaceful afternoon. Rohm was no more inclined than Hitler to leave the issue between them to the slow process of law. The law can be closely criticized when the law is spontaneously respected. But, when the law is violently crossed, it is apt to turn very rough. Carlyle belaboured the point in his customary manner. 'Unwritten, if you will, but real and fundamental, anterior to all written laws and first making written laws possible, there must have been, and is, and will be, coeval with human society from its first beginnings to its ultimate end, an actual martial-law of more validity than any other law whatever.' Necessities of war have made this fact self-evident, even in the purlieus of Knightsbridge. When the Lord Chancellor spoke with deep scorn of the tyranny by which Niemoller, acquitted in court, was still held prisoner, he forgot that we had done very much the same thing here by our own conscientious dissidents, and had done so because we could do no other.

The normal peace of Knightsbridge is a highly artificial creation. The more we value the protection of established law and open procedure, the more we should be careful not to weaken popular respect for these institutions. Mr. Curry several times mentions the rules of the road as examples of laws which make for

greater freedom. It is curious that he has not noticed that these are laws which have been flagrantly, and too often, successfully defied. Over the course of the war, the total of deaths on the roads has been more than half the total of deaths from air raids, and for many years it has enormously overtopped the death rate of the mining industry. Much of the suffering, as in mining, may have been 'inevitable'; but much of it was caused by lawlessness, callousness and profound moral stupidity. Yet, 'the price of coal' roused sentimental pity and indignation, while 'the price of speed' was accepted as a necessary cost.

One of the favourite legendary ogres of the *ancien régime* is the *aristo* who runs down and kills the little son of a poor man in his wanton carelessness and haste, and casts the grief-stricken father a gold coin or two in contemptuous compensation. Generations of schoolchildren have thrilled at this dreadful insolence and cruel pride, and it might have been expected that indignation fed on such memories would reach dangerous heights when old and young died every day under the wanton wheels of arrogant self-indulgence, and the law showed the utmost feebleness in punishment. The revival of Associations for the Prosecution of Felons would not have been surprising. But no such thing happened. There was comment, of course, particularly when the indulgence of the bench could be interpreted as class favouritism; but the temper of the comment was pitifully mild. Indeed, many progressives, far from strengthening the hand of the law against anarchy, eagerly exploited the situation to 'expose police methods.' Police and motorists were bound to be at war. Progress supported the motorists because they were moving fast and because they were against the police. The downtrodden classes, who died under the wheels, were thought to suffer less than a motorist who found the police to be rude. The fumbling, nerveless handling of traffic lawlessness should have been considered as a matter of much more serious importance to us than the misfortunes of Sacco and Vanzetti, or of Tom Mooney, or of the Scottsboro Boys, but there was no parallel demonstrations of anger and reforming zeal. American legal injustice carried no immediate threat to our own lives and liberty, yet our own traffic injustice did. But the point was ignored. The modern mind simply could not bring itself to support the enforcement of law.

It was the same with the financial pirates who did so much to manufacture poverty where there was a sufficiency of poverty



from natural causes. More of these criminals escaped than were ever punished, and very few got the punishment they deserved. But the public conscience was apathetic to this disgraceful lethargy of justice. Lethargy is what progress expects from the law. The progressive view of criminal reform is a continual weakening of the sanctions of the law. The view is personally unwise; for many progressives gain largely by the orthodox heavy-handed maintenance of law and order. Parading nudists and traffickers in pornographic art and literature are given to squeaking their shrill protests against the occasional interference of uneducated and insensitive policemen and customs officers with their enlightened pursuits. They would squeak louder if the police allowed them to do exactly as they liked—and allowed others to throw them into horse ponds.

The freedom of the artist to live his own life (at the common expense) without interference is taken for granted. Censorship of any kind is anathema. The artist will spontaneously obey the laws of his craft (or so it is assumed) and he must obey no other. It is glibly stated, flatly against history, that outside interference is fatal to art. So the artist demands that his art be judged entirely by the criteria of art, as the scientist might demand that we stand respectful and abashed before the chemical perfection of his poison gas. If ever a novel is banned by the police, the progressive community can be guaranteed to rush to the rescue. As likely as not they will explain that they consider the novel to be a particularly puerile piece of work, but they will insist that the sacred principle of the public sale of indecency and corruption must, at all times and at all costs, be preserved.

In artistic, as in political matters, progressives show an inferiority complex towards the revolutionary. They remember that Flaubert was prosecuted, that the French Independents were laughed at, that Lyrical Ballads did not sell, that James Joyce could hardly find a publisher. These are salutary warnings, but in spite of them, the fact remains that most artistic novelties are bad; that an attitude of eager and respectful receptivity towards the new thing is silly: the new thing has to prove itself, and usually fails to do so. The most scathing criticism of Keats's early poems was an exceedingly competent piece of work, unkind and bigoted though it was and it probably did Keats a great deal of good. Hostility, based on intelligible principle is usually helpful. Vacuous admiration of good is always bad. More



artists have been ruined by an easy acceptance than were ever ruined by unfriendly criticism.

Art for Art's Sake has shown many signs of shrinking to the meaner conception of Art for the Artist's Sake, and of passing from that altogether beyond the reach of criticism. That is unfortunate, for private writing is not of much public interest, and public interest is what the most private of artists still seems to want. Desire for public approval is natural, but illogical in persons who despise the public. The artist who says 'Take it or leave it' has presented us with an alternative, not with an ultimatum; and he has no reason for screaming persecution if we choose to leave it.

Freedom of opinion is even more jealously guarded than freedom of artistic creation. Not many progressives fancy themselves as creative artists; but, being human, they think they have much to say of value to the world in the line of logical argument and practical wisdom. According to the hopeful theory of the matter, unlimited freedom of exposition and argument is beneficial, indeed essential, to human progress: because the better cause will in the end carry conviction by the force of its intrinsic virtue. If men's thoughts were directed entirely by cool, dispassionate logic, and if men were governed entirely by their thoughts, that theory would indeed be plausible; but the facts say otherwise. No progressive can contemplate the success of *Mein Kampf* or the propaganda of Dr. Goebbels with equanimity and the distortions of free opinion in Germany are faintly echoed, if not yet matched, over here. Unlimited freedom of the Press seems less attractive when the Press falls into the hands of a few wealthy owners, unknown or only too well known. The concentration of the means of expression in few and sordid hands is a very real problem. Yet the strongest organization of journalists rejects suggestions for a mild and liberal control, even when that control is to be vested largely in themselves. They cannot, in any circumstances, support authority.

It is sometimes argued that suppression is called for only in doubtful matters, that nobody wishes to suppress a statement of the opinion that the earth is flat or that the half is greater than the whole; and that it is precisely in doubtful matters that liberty of expression is most valuable. That is a typical piece of progressive logic-chopping. Among the 'doubtful' matters are, the existence of God; the meaning, purpose and responsibilities of

human life; and the possibility and the value of liberty itself. It cannot be denied that the correct answer to these problems is of some importance; yet they have been discussed since the beginning of controversy and will continue to be discussed till the end of time. We must arrive at some conclusion on fundamentals before we die. It is not to be imagined that complete freedom of argument on these matters provides us with an endless feast of pure reason. The most effective arguments are often the most illogical. There are suasions which play havoc with the mental processes. Among the freedoms now popularly advocated is freedom for an unbalanced and frantic woman to submit to an abortion, to sacrifice the life of another for her own comfort; and freedom for a bedridden invalid to sign away his life to save his relatives. High moral arguments have been advanced for these liberties, but the arguments which are likely to influence decision are acutely personal and emotional. Logic hardly enters the argument. The 'better' cause is that which appeals most to the emotional softness of the time. It is not to be conceded that a matter is necessarily doubtful because a number of people choose to doubt it. Indeed, any civilization must make final and firm decisions on problems which may be considered open to dispute. This is a measure of precaution, because it must protect the certainties on which it is based. Freedom to spread doubt may be permitted safely when the reigning orthodoxy is strong and the opposition negligible. When the opposition becomes strong, self-preservation demands an invasion of liberty. British respect for conscientious objection to vaccination would hardly survive a severe epidemic of smallpox. Respect for Sir Oswald Mosley's minority opinions did not survive the declaration of war.

It is very likely that any form of limitation of speech and publication will have attendant evils, for it is not in mortals to command perfection. Freedom of expression is desirable up to the limits of safety and, perhaps, with some margin of risk beyond. But the evils attendant on almost unlimited freedom are not to be denied; they are here to be seen, if we are willing to look. If the bookstalls are loaded with printed matter calculated to debauch the minds of the young, if publications of gross irresponsibility and malice do patent damage to the national interest at home and abroad, if the accepted need for a higher birth-rate is flouted by a flood of contraceptive literature, patent and destructive evils are mounting which must, somehow, be

dealt with. If Knightsbridge methods fail, then others must be tried. Freedom is a responsibility. It is not enough to regret the abuses of freedom. These abuses must, somehow, be checked.

It is the misfortune of our contemporary civilization that its certainties are negative, and the accepted principle of free opinion is most evidently negative. Negative civilizations do not last: they do not replace what is uprooted. We may be the gainers by the degree of tolerance which allowed the activities of Josephine Butler, but we are not the gainers by the tolerance which permits birth control propagandists to masquerade as government agents. Nor do we admit that Germany is the gainer by the tolerance which gave a free hand to Hitler. The tolerance which allows another the best facilities for sharpening the knife for your own murder is too fatuous for the practical conduct of affairs. Voltaire said: 'I disagree with every word you say, and I shall fight to the death for your right to say it.' It was a large round statement, but he did not mean it, or anything like it. He also said: '*Ecrasez l'infâme.*'

Freedom of speech logically implies freedom of action; otherwise, speech is futility. Freedom of action reaches its richest absurdity in the propaganda and, to a large degree, in the practice of progressive education. It is highly progressive to insist that children should be compelled to attend school, but it is deeply reactionary to say that they should be compelled to learn anything when they are there. Full-time education from the age of two to sixteen and half-time education to eighteen is quite a moderate progressive demand. But, within this large framework of compulsion, the children are to be allowed to govern and, to a large extent, to educate themselves. The truly progressive teacher sees himself as a diffident and apologetic adviser who knows how to take a hint and remove himself from the classroom when he is not wanted. But the theory that children, left to themselves, will follow the good, the beautiful and the true with unflagging zeal and a mature sense of proportion sometimes leads to trouble, even in the most advanced establishments. A progressive teacher once asked what he should do when a progressive pupil poured a cup of tea down the back of his neck. It was a touching human appeal, but he got no sympathy from Mrs. Bertrand Russell. Such a thing could not happen, she said, to a man of magnetic personality; but, if it did happen, the course of conduct was plain. He should take another cup of tea and, with laughing good-



humour, but firmly, he should pour it down the back of the pupil's neck. The suggested remedy implied a degree of sporting give-and-take on the pupil's part which nothing in his conduct entitled us to expect, and there was no advice on adequate counter-measures if the pupil resisted treatment and hacked the teacher repeatedly and painfully on the shins.

The tea-party incident was apparently authentic, and Mrs. Russell's reputation is beyond criticism by all who look to the future without casting eyes on the present. That progressive education should work at all, marred by such catastrophes and mended by such advice, is a tribute to the power of the things against which progressive educationists set their faces. It is a tribute to luxury civilization, to the effective protection of a hot-house environment completely remote from life and rendered possible only by the sweat of the toiling masses. It is a tribute to the protective mechanisms of young children.

But, in view of life as it is, the results may truly be described as pitiful. Progressives say that the children of modern schools are not being bred to fit into the harsh and stupid conditions of life as it is, but to fit harmoniously into the life which they themselves will make. But spoiled children never made anything except conscientious objectors. Bred in a fairyland where they accepted no guide to conduct but their own immediate inclination, they will be rather badly out of place in a world where older and more responsible people do not wait attentive on their wishes. Far more than the most repressed children of the unthinking bourgeoisie, they are the victims of parental egotism. There may be a revulsion on their part. The original Hitler Youth and Storm Troopers were not the product of hide-bound orthodoxy in education, but of the Weimar system which was enlightened to a very high degree. The same revulsion may well happen here. But, whatever be the reaction of progressive children to their training, they are quite unimportant to the world at large. The future does not lie with the only children of well-to-do parents. They are much too few.

Common sense is not permitted to cloud the progressive view of education, for the progressive mind is governed by negativism and sentimentality. Vague memories of Tom-All-Alone and other Victorian waifs who were shut out by cruel fate from the intellectual treasures of the Penny Cyclopaedia make universal and compulsory education seem an urgent necessity to all those



who can pick and choose the education of their own children. But memories of Dr. Blimber and Wackford Squeers make all thoughts of discipline distasteful. Planned anarchy is the hoped-for result of compulsory attendance and voluntary attention.

But that happy state has not yet arrived. Reaction is still rife in State schools. Work is exacted, some standard of behaviour is demanded, and competition is not despised. The generous and daring views expressed by voluble members of the N.U.T. do not always correspond with the practice of these same persons in their classrooms. In their very private capacity as teachers, they sometimes act as if their more unpleasant pupils were not merely maladjusted subjects and victims of the system, but were positively of bad character, and as if their lack of industry was not due either to a bad curriculum, bad conditions or bad teaching, but to plain laziness, which is a painfully observable thing. A teacher may confidently say in public that anti-social characteristics are always the result of environment, but in his dealings with children he can hardly believe it steadfastly, and he certainly cannot afford to act on it.

If even the leaders of the profession are not continuously enlightened, the rank and file are even less satisfactory. A large number are indifferent, if not hostile, to the New Education, and have no notion at all of training citizens for a future spectacularly different from the present they enjoy. Yet, criticism of the teaching profession is exceedingly mild. Obstructions in the way of educational progress are noted and removed, when possible, with an understanding sigh, when teachers have caused the obstructions. There is no wholesale and vigorous condemnation. Progressives are anxious to find the germ of good in the worst of teachers and are nearly as ready to impute the teacher's sins to circumstance as they are to impute the pupil's. Evidences of zeal, however misplaced, are eagerly seized on, and the most stubborn opposition is explained away as being caused by bad training or by early enthusiasm gone sour with disappointment. This large and anxious friendliness for all teachers, at least for all teachers in State schools, is in marked contrast to the whole-hearted condemnation of parents, and, still more, to the condemnation of military leaders. The reason is simple enough. Progressive criticism of soldiers and parents is unhelpfully hostile because progressives do not approve of the function of soldiers and suspect the function of parents.

A little intelligent charity in progressive criticism of Army methods would have worked wonders. As it was, the criticism fell on deafened ears. However sound the criticism might be in fact, there was no disguising that it was given by men whose will was bad towards the Army. They did not want to improve the Army; they wanted to reduce its prestige; the more inept the Army system was, the better they were pleased. Indeed, they must have recognized that their attitude towards Army reform was not really practical. In their hearts they knew that the Army could not be run on the happy lines of a Class-room Republic of a Summer School Conference of Progressive Societies; that discipline, even unthinking discipline, could not safely be abolished, and that distinctions of rank, however disguised, would have to remain solid and clear. 'Freedom' and the Army do not go together. Grudgingly admitting the necessity for an Army, but not really interested in seeing it efficient, and deeply unwilling to see it popular, the civilian critic worked very hard to make it ridiculous. This work has not been suspended even in war-time, and its results have been very bad.

The lack of a larger sense of responsibility shown by the sub-pacifist elements in journalism is a striking example of the evils that come from inordinate claims. In a civilization that had weakened in its governing general principles, members of every craft exploited the possibilities of their craft, developed its technique and pursued its particular 'good end' without reference or obedience to the demands of any larger end. Motor engineers yearly put better cars on the roads, cars that ran faster and more comfortably, and killed more people. In places, the exploitation of technique had already defeated itself. An American cartoon showed a streamlined car standing among a thousand other cars, locked immovably in Times Square. 'I guess,' said the proud owner, 'we've got wind resistance licked.' The motoring correspondent of another journal, speaking of the German autobahns, said that the tourist could now see the beauties of the Rhineland at seventy-five miles an hour. In fact, the really up-to-date motor roads ran through the flattest and dreariest stretches of country that could be found.

Much fuss was made about the inordinate exploitation which gave us ribbon development. It was undoubtedly a bad exploitation, but was ferociously attacked because it offended the eye. Thousands cried out when a bungalow growth destroyed a good

view, but very few when it merely destroyed good land. There was no outcry at all against the neat and modern construction of flats which ingeniously gave room for everything except a baby. The future has no room for babies. The surrender of the authority of general principle and of its claim to subdue particular ends to itself was startlingly shown by the Scottish minister who deprecated his Kirk discussing birth control, because, he said, it was a medical problem.

Instances of inordinate claims could be multiplied almost indefinitely, but it may be more profitable to note that 'inordinate' is the correct description. For the 'end' of an uncontrolled technique is very apt to be an expanding end. If the motor car is not made to fit into the social framework, then the social framework must be altered to fit the motor car. Mr. Philip Jordan is so profoundly dissatisfied with the traditional servants of foreign policy, and so profoundly satisfied with the sagacity of his colleagues of the Press, that he has suggested that foreign correspondents should take the place of the old-style diplomat. *Picture Post*, going further, sometimes gives the impression that its prominent contributors and editorial staff should take the place of the Cabinet. No doubt its opinion of itself is in reality more moderate than appears, but there was no moderation in its protest when the Government decided no longer to subsidise its circulation in the Middle East. The fact that the Government had decided no longer to pay to have hostile criticism distributed among doubtful populations and to have damaging attacks on the conduct of the Army brought before the members of the Army was taken as an insufferable attack on the liberty of the Press. *Picture Post* demanded the resignation of the Minister of Information.

There was inordinacy in the fever of that complaint. There was greater inordinacy in the attitude of Sanderson of Oundle, a man very representative of his kind. He decided that it was impossible to have a truly satisfactory school so long as we had unsatisfactory parents and an unsatisfactory world.<sup>1</sup> 'The parents and the boys,' he told a meeting, 'both are my business.' Mr. H. G. Wells thoroughly approved of this large attitude and its larger implications. 'He saw the modern teacher,' said Mr.

<sup>1</sup> In an early novel, dealing with office life, Mr. Sinclair Lewis said that office life would become happy when war and tuberculosis were abolished. It seems a long time to work in an office.

Wells, 'in university and school plainly for what he has to be, the anticipator, the planner, and the foundation-maker of the new and greater order of human life that arises now visibly amidst the decaying structures of the old.'

It would be interesting to know what would happen if the progeny of Sanderson met the progeny of Mr. Philip Jordan, each claiming to govern the world, but the contest is not at all likely to take place. The new order of human life that arises is one in which the power lies in other and stronger hands. If Sanderson were alive he could see the ruin of the new order that was visibly rising in 1924, and he could see also the decay of liberty. For liberty without order and measure and responsibility will effectually put an end to itself.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EQUALITY

**I**F the popular conception of liberty is dangerous and self-destructive, the popular conception of equality is equally wrong-headed and has had equally bad results. The axiom that all men are created equal is true and enormously important, so far as it goes; but, taken beyond that, it leads to singularly fatuous conclusions. That all men have an equal right to the pursuit of happiness is an encouraging statement, much reduced in meaning by the fact that men pursue happiness with different degrees of speed and staying power, and in a great number of different directions. So long as one man's meat remains another man's poison, equality by legislation will cause as many internal troubles as the American experiment in prohibition. Equality has no truth if it is not based on self-respect, and a positive sense of personal worth.

Burns has been much and drearily quoted on the subject of equality; but it is not at all likely that Burns would feel any admiration for his glib admirers. Laying heavy emphasis on the intrinsic worth of Man, it was enough for Burns to feel worthy and to be worthy. Strong in his own self-confidence, he did not feel impelled to make red-faced protests when he met people who



thought differently, and wrongly, of himself. The contemporary egalitarian is not satisfied with his own knowledge of his own worth; he calls on the whole world to reassure him continuously and unanimously on the point. His poet is not Burns, but Walt Whitman. Whitman wrote a poem called the 'Song of the Answerer.' The Answerer, who was himself, met the President of the United States and was not in the least abashed.

'He says, indifferently and alike, "How are you friend?" He walked into the halls of Congress, perfectly at ease, and the Congressmen nudged each other and said, "here is our equal appearing".' Admittedly, Whitman wrote many better poems, but none in which he more neatly expressed the inferiority complex of the free and independent citizen. Moving among those who might consider themselves his superiors, it is not enough that they should accept his presence. It is not enough that they should nudge each other on his arrival, for they might be nudging each other in an unfavourable, unfriendly or sneering way. They must say, loudly and repeatedly: 'Here is our equal.' If they do not say that, the free and equal man cannot be sure they believe it, and he will therefore not be sure that he believes it himself. As people who take essential equality for granted frequently forget to issue the consoling testimonial, there is much heart-burning, indignation and suspicion.

As the political liberty of the French Revolution and the economic liberty of the Communist Manifesto have become considerably mixed in the progressive mind, so have the ideas of political and economic equality. Manhood suffrage conferred equality on all men, in so far as they are political animals. But giving one vote to each man did not iron out the differences between one man and another, any more than the giving of the vote to women ironed out the difference between the sexes. Universal franchise has no value if it does not encourage all citizens to believe that they have a personal interest in, and a personal responsibility for, the welfare of the country. That sense of interest and responsibility is notoriously lacking. Mr. W. H. Guy, who won a brilliant by-election triumph for the Labour Party at South Poplar, said: 'I won because we fought this election a hundred per cent behind the Government. This result will be a message to everybody to see this thing through to a finish.' He scored three thousand odd votes, out of an electorate of well over forty thousand. The equality of universal

franchise cannot have meant much to the huge majority who did not vote. The proletariat have no doubt as to who are 'They' and who are 'Us.' The fact that 'They' and 'Us' have one vote each does not make the proletarians feel equal. 'They' are all persons not engaged in manual labour, all Government and local officials, including the servants of the social services, all full-time Union officials and all politicians in place. When a Labour politician accepts office or public responsibility of any kind, he at once becomes 'They.' 'Us' are the proletariat, governed by a foreign body called The State. They consider that they owe no duty at all to the State, and no gratitude, but they do feel an instinctive duty to their native land. Progressives keep prodding at the dead nerve of duty to the State in the vain hope of quickening it, and, with deadly perversity, they try their best to deaden the living nerve of response to patriotism, and not without success.

Few women feel any more deeply involved in the anxieties of politics because they have been endowed with the vote. A number of middle-class women do (and the progressive mind is incurably middle-class), but the bulk of women do not. Mr. Bernard Shaw once explained the failure of the British Socialist movement with reference to a typical flapper, whom he called, I think, Miss Begonia Brown of Manchester. The Fabian Society, he explained, had converted virtually all serious-minded people to Socialism, and the dawn was to be expected at any moment. But it was a principle of the greatest importance that Woman (i.e. Miss Begonia Brown) should have a vote, whether she wanted it or not. So she was given a vote and, without any regard at all to the excellent series of Fabian pamphlets or to the Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, she cast it for the candidate with curly hair. The absolute principle of 1789 (political equality) clashed with the absolute principle of 1847 (economic equality), 1847 was crushed, but 1789 was an unimpressive winner.

Universal franchise has not merged the 'two nations.' Rather, in its manipulation, it has exasperated the standing difference. Those who think, with Mr. Shaw, that universal franchise stands in the way of equal income will not all be inclined to accept the situation with his humorous resignation. The more comfortable Socialists will be more resigned than the others. Equality of income is the ultimate aim of all good Socialists, but intellectual Socialists are not, as a rule, consumed with any burning zeal to

see it here and now. The reason is very natural. Progressive writers, teachers, politicians, publishers and professional odds and ends have nearly all incomes above the national average: a large number are very comfortable; a few are positively rich. It is neither surprising nor disgraceful that they should be inclined to postpone the Communist idea to some future date, considering the great difficulties in the way and the more urgent work which clamours to be done. Political equality is sufficient for their personal needs.

The most urgent work that lies to the progressive hand is the abolition of privilege; the securing of the necessary universal testimonial that each man is as good as another, if not better. A great deal of abolition calls to be done before this happy end is achieved. The public schools must, of course, be abolished; for nothing exasperates the prevailing inferiority complex so badly as the old school tie. Knowing nothing whatever about public schools and a good deal about other kinds, I have no predilection in their favour, but it is painfully obvious that the opponents of public schools cannot keep their temper. The reaction to Colonel Bingham's remarkably funny letter about officer cadets was a sad instance. Once the Colonel had been removed from his post there was really no need to waste the time of Parliament in discussing the matter. But members, unfortunately, seized the chance to air a standing grievance, and very badly they did it, too. Of the propriety of the Colonel's conduct there could be no dispute; he was entirely wrong and his dismissal closed the issue. But the angry members were not satisfied with that. Inside and outside Parliament it was very clear that egalitarians were not contented with having the Colonel stopped from saying what he said; they were resentful because they could find no law to stop him from thinking what he thought. They had found a man who did not say: 'Here is our equal,' and they could not control their indignation.

A great opportunity was missed by every working-class M.P. who does not rely on soothing words from others to fortify his opinion of himself; for the letter gave an admirable chance to the satirist. It was a romantic notion of the Colonel's that public schools are peopled with lads, bred in a long tradition of service to the family retainers. That notion could have stood a good deal of humorous development with reference to the allegedly historic lineage of many Conservative members, and perhaps some



special mention of the Prime Minister's old school. But there was no geniality in the Labour mood, because there was no self-confidence. The public schools come under two fires. Working-class leaders resent them because they are homes of privilege, giving to the fortunate few an education that was denied to themselves. They resent, also, the real or imaginary prestige attaching to the public schoolboy, and they want to destroy that prestige by legislation or by public clamour. 'The State secondary schools,' they claim, 'produce as good a type, if not better, a type more in touch with the realities of life and more adapted to the future society. It is disgraceful that they should be in any sense subordinate to the sons of privilege.' It is an argument that betrays a profound lack of assurance. In this pugnacious world, no governing class keeps its place for long by snobbish favouritism and back-scratching. If the secondary schools do produce a type even as good as the public school type, they will have no difficulty in supplanting them, for they are growing enormously in numbers, while the public school boys are not. If secondary school boys fail to establish their position to their own satisfaction, the fault will be their own—or the fault of their schools.

Working-class leaders and the more highbrow progressives unite in condemning the public schools; but not always for the same reasons. However democratic an educated man may be, he is a very odd specimen if he does not attach some importance to his education and does not believe that it has improved his judgement. He may feel that he and his imperfectly educated comrade are equal in the eye of God, or the dialectic, or the returning officer. He may admit that in some respects, for example in physical hardihood, the other may be the better man. But he feels, also, that in matters which demand knowledge and intellectual training he has a great advantage. He may listen respectfully to a miners' delegate talking about practical problems of the pit, but he will not go to him willingly for instruction on economic theory or on the nice conduct of foreign affairs. Keir Hardie visited India and decided that the Indian masses were materially worse off under British rule than they had been under their native princes. He did not reach this decision after profound research. He reached it before he went to India at all. It was quite simply a decision of prejudice. The highbrows of the Socialist movement could hardly pretend otherwise than that Keir Hardie, a man of limited talent though high character, was



incompetent to offer any opinion at all. They would not say so, but that is what they would think.

A decision similar to Keir Hardie's was reached last year by the majority union of Lanarkshire miners. Their delegates met to accept an offer of increased wages, but they also passed a resolution that the fullest measure of democratic self-government should at once be granted to India. Presumably aware that one of the difficulties in the way of democratic self-government in India was the question of minorities, they must have been confident that a democratic government would be carefully tender of all minority rights and respectful of minority differences. Yet at the same meeting they made it a condition of acceptance of the wage increase that it should be refused to members of a rival union; their own minority. Confronted by such demonstrations, the highbrows quite conspicuously fail to say: 'Here are our equals.'

Highbrows feel superior to imperfectly educated men in some matters where they have a show of reason; and also in others where they have none; for the clerks who think they can run everything better than everybody else do certainly think they can run the Unions better than the officials; who, in fact, often show a grasp of reality and a practical sagacity which the intellectuals emphatically do not share. This superiority of the Union official is, again, a superiority of training. But working-class leaders are not willing to attach its proper superiority to training. Having learned their lesson of equality too well, they are too apt to resent all superiorities, real or imaginary. They complain that they and their like were denied the advantages of higher education and yet, by their readiness to speak on any topic, indicate that they suffer from no disadvantage at all. They will deny the right of any man to speak on problems of coalmining without experience, but will resent any suggestion that uninformed sentimentality is not a sufficient equipment for redrafting the map of the world. The latent antagonism between the highbrow and the working-class leader remains more or less concealed, principally by the efforts of the highbrow, who professes enormous respect for Old Tom This and Old Charlie That; but it is there, and it is felt on both sides. The Labour Party Congress will listen respectfully to Mr. Laski so long as he tells them how right they are, but if he tries to tell them they are wrong, he will at once become an intellectual snob. In education, Mr. Laski is one of 'They.'

But all progressives, highbrow or working-class, are agreed

on the need for total equality of opportunity. All children have an equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of learning. The fact that some children are stupid, while others are not, presents a difficulty which, at first sight, seems insurmountable. But not so. The most up-to-date educational theory teaches that there are many kinds of talent, all to be accorded exactly encouragement and honour. This strange belief has been eagerly adopted by Conservative ministers. Some children are apt at dead languages, others at the living, others again at science, still others at engineering, while a great many girls have a taste for cookery and sewing and as many boys are, in the deadly phrase, 'good with their hands.' All children, when they reach a certain age, are to be tested on their junior accomplishments. If they pass, they go to a common centre of higher education, where Greek and plain cooking are studied under the same roof. If they fail, they must wait a few months in their junior school. If they fail again they shall be considered to have passed.

This, which sounds like a farce, is the last word in educational idealism. Organizations of teachers, who should and do know better, have lent their support to the idea; which shows how thoroughly sentimentality and professional vanity can blind people to the facts under their noses. One fact, still recognized, destroys the theory. Some pupils are still to be denied the benefits of equal opportunity. Those who are mentally certifiable are sent to special schools where Greek is not among the options. It is felt to be better for them and for the others that their education should be conducted by their own teachers under their own particular roof. Yet for every child who is certifiable, there are several who are almost as dull, and these must be sent to invigorate the atmosphere of the omnibus school. Socrates once said that, as he could not run as fast as an Olympic champion and the champion could easily walk as slowly as he, it was the duty of the champion to take his pace from Socrates if they went together for a walk. The argument was only partially true. The champion certainly could walk as slowly as Socrates, but he would take care not to walk with him too often, if he wanted to keep his turn of speed and his title.

If the democratic educational system is ever applied on a large scale, egalitarians will at last have very real reason to fear the competition of public and all other schools which remain addicted to intellectual snobbery. If the clever pupils in the

omnibus school do not suffer from an atmosphere of lethargy, then the dull pupils will suffer from an atmosphere of terrifying and incomprehensible industry. The first would be the greater misfortune.

The keenest egalitarians reject the idea of competition with privately controlled schools. They will not be happy till all private schools are abolished, for not otherwise will the product of the State school be quite free from a suspicion or a sense of inferiority. He can be happily sure that his school is inferior to none other, when there is none other to be inferior to. Clerkly progressives are by no means unanimous on the desirability of this reform, for they like to pick and choose their own schools for their own children, and are acutely conscious of some deficiencies of the State system. But proletarian progressives are stubbornly for it. Whether State education be bad or good, particularly if it be bad, they want it for all. Sauce for the T.U.C. goose is sauce for the Fabian gander. They will not be satisfied till, against the known wishes of poorer parents and children, the school-leaving age is considerably raised, and, against the known wishes of more prosperous parents and children, all children are conscripted into the system. That may be equality; it can hardly be called liberty.

It may be questioned whether the State has an absolute duty to offer, or the cleverest youth an unqualified right to receive, the best education that money and effort can buy. The fact that wealthy children enjoy great advantages is quite simply an envious irrelevance. If wealth is a gift of fortune, so is talent. When we say that the State must educate the clever children of poor parents, we mean that the parents of rather ordinary or dull children must pay for the education of other people's children, who happen to be cleverer than their own. There are good reasons, compelling reasons, why we, parents, bachelors, taxpayers in general, should provide a good education for promising pupils, and a much better education than they now receive: but they are not unqualified reasons. We must provide the education because the nation is not so abounding in talent that we can afford to neglect any, wherever it be found. But we do not wish to train talent for the exclusive benefit of the talented person. We train the talented person so that he may enrich the community. If we train him with great technical proficiency, but in an atmosphere of dreary secularism, of rancorous insistence on rights



and total neglect of duty, we have thrown away our time and money. The scholarship men who are so prominent in the Civil Service are an asset and an honour to the country; but the scholarship men who sulk round the fringes of the Communist Party are a liability.

You taught me language; and my profit on it  
Is, I know how to curse.

There is a story, possibly a legend, of Beaumont, the Jesuit school, and Eton: the schools are almost neighbours. The cricket captain of Beaumont, it is said, challenged the captain of the Eton team, who loftily asked: 'What is Beaumont?' To which the Beaumont captain replied: 'Beaumont is what Eton was, a school for the sons of Catholic gentlemen.' The story, if true, reflects small credit on Eton, and, true or false, even less on Beaumont. For Beaumont should have known that Eton never was a school for the sons of Catholic gentlemen. (The Catholic gentlemen is a Protestant invention.) Eton was founded to provide the best possible education for boys, mostly poor, who lived within twelve miles of Windsor and intended to study for the priesthood.

Henry VI was not much concerned with the sons of gentlemen, but he would have been surprised to hear that it was his duty to provide education for those who intended nothing more generous than to do well for themselves, or more desirable than to spread subversive doctrines. Nowadays, progressives would be equally surprised to hear that it was their unqualified duty to pay the entire cost of ecclesiastical seminaries. Yet, if every lad had a right to his opportunity, they are bound to do so. Conditions of modern life are more complex, and the choice of a career is far more varied than in the days when an ecclesiastical career was the normal channel for a clerk; but a truly self-confident State would not judge a school which it supported merely by the criterion of examination results. It would consider the mature product of the school, and would ask if the school trained good men and women whatever careers they adopted. If not, the school would be cleaned out, and past pupils would find it advisable to conceal their old school ties.

The attack on privilege is launched wherever privilege is seen or smelt, and only too often it is marked by rancour, disproportionate resentment and positive envy. Titles, forms of address, special manners of speech, special dress, any kind of social



exclusiveness or particularity are found intolerable. The fight for sex equality assumes a deepening tinge of envy. For example, women teachers are strong for equal pay, and many of them would feel much happier if men teachers were reduced to their own level, without one penny of advantage to themselves. They are not greedy; they are just jealous. It is not to be thought that ambition for equality invariably cuts both ways. Professional women who stand by 'the rate for the job' are not all enthusiastic for the same rate for all jobs. Skilled tradesmen who assert their equal value with the professional man are often anxious to assert their greater value against the unskilled by insisting on higher wages; and much honest indignation has been caused by war-time vagaries of payment which upset this differentiation.

Discontent is not always divine. When it drives men to secure an improvement in positively bad conditions of life it serves a useful social purpose. But discontent with one's own bad fortune is one thing; discontent with another's good fortune is a different, and an ugly thing. It certainly does not promote happiness and, still less, national unity.

Discontent is, of course, disproportionately strong among the vocal and politically active groups. There are still huge masses of ordinary folk who do not wonder to themselves if they are inferior because others may think they are, and do not feel they have shamefully too little simply because others have more. Such people may be spiritless and politically asleep, but they contrive to be happy. When men and women lead fairly full lives and enjoy a reasonable satisfaction of their normal wants, it is not easy to persuade them to poison their days and nights by rancorous comparisons. Luxury is properly offensive to the underfed, because it underlines an absolute want; but it should not greatly disturb the sleep of those who enjoy a decent living.

If you look hard for privilege and discrimination, you can find them anywhere. A member of a large Education Committee opposed a proposal that children between twelve and fourteen should be allowed to spend a few weeks away from school to help with a wartime harvest.<sup>1</sup> 'Why twelve to

<sup>1</sup> Yet the people who are strongest against such measures are loudest in praise of Russia for adopting them, much more drastically. The mania was well illustrated in the *Daily Worker*, at Christmas-time. The Government forbade the supply of turkey to restaurants between certain dates. This, the *Worker* said, was playing into the hands of the rich. If the Government had permitted turkey in restaurants, that would also have been playing into the hands of the rich.

fourteen?' he asked. 'These are the working-class children.' Thinking like that is a special gift; it resembles Jew mania. The privileges which most annoy the working class are the privileges of inherited talent. It is much easier for an aristocrat to be convincingly democratic in a social way than it is for a highbrow to be democratic in an intellectual way. Also, the claims of rank and wealth are more easily separable from the person than are the claims of talent. A poor man can see himself as a duke, given the happy accidents of birth and training, and see himself as still the same man. But he cannot see himself as Einstein. In a world where rank and differences of wealth were swept away, the privileges of talent would appear formidable. Mr. Priestley has said that the terms First and Third Class should be abolished from our railways, because they offend democratic sentiment. But in his own imagined society, where the artist is indissolubly fused with life, it would be necessary to reserve special classless carriages for eminent persons travelling on important business. Such men must be free to write, study and think on their journeys. It was a Socialist M.P., and a distinguished one, who objected to travelling, at the national expense, with a band of sailors, who sang songs, drank beer and disturbed his mental strife for the brotherhood of Man.

'By God!' said Whitman. 'I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.' Presumably he would have refused a reader's ticket to the British Museum (though he did not refuse a free pass on the local ferry). But the deepest pleasures of the clerkly class are heavily subsidised and other classes have no counterpart. Nobody minds that, so long as the clever persons do not look superior. If they do, people mind very badly. In a society where incomes were flattened and all rank abolished, the clerks might begin to look very superior indeed.

Although the propaganda of discontent has not entirely permeated the contemporary mind, it has sunk in a good deal too far. It has helped to create the undoubtedly deep proletarian admiration for the Russian Revolution. To the clerk, the Revolution was the realization of a confused and contradictory mass of economic, political, social, moral and intellectual hopes. The clerk suffered inevitable disappointment, because the Revolution could not possibly satisfy all his complex of fads. But to the working man, the Revolution was a simple and majestic act.

*Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles.* It is an old and ineradicable dream. The working man was not shocked by nationalism, suppression of speech, purges, invasions or Stakhanovism. He might argue against these facts or try to explain them away, for he knew them for effective debating points against him; but they did not touch the heart of his admiration. Living in the dreadful spiritual dejection of unemployment and feeling the cold insult of his idleness, his eyes turned to a country where the service of the primary producer was the dominant need of the State. What Russia needed most was the work of men like himself. It might be a tyranny; but the man with the hammer and the man with the sickle stood by the throne of the king.

The dream has had deeply regrettable effects and may well have more; but there have been bad results of egalitarian propaganda in another and a more surprising direction. The proletariat have been taught by their leaders to attach no value to the social gains they have achieved. If they enjoy a larger supply of material goods than they did, they must remind themselves that their wants have expanded, and that 'relatively' they are no better off. The only way to satisfy an appetite that grows on what it feeds on is to make sure that nobody has any more than anybody else. Therefore, the proletariat were instructed that, so long as there was diversity of wealth, they had 'nothing to fight for,' and that they would show extreme folly if they laid down their lives for big business companies and the House of Lords.

When the German Revolution came, progressives found that there was something to fight for, after all—political and intellectual liberty and the trade union structure. But large numbers of the proletariat were painfully indifferent to political and intellectual liberty, and, in any event, they had been told that the loss of these in Russia was a small price to pay for equality. Even the destruction of trade union machinery and the persecution of union officials afflicted the paying member much less than it did the paid. When the progressives told the workers that they did have something to fight for, they meant they should fight for the progressives.

The workers were not indifferent to German crimes.

No doubt they disapproved of intellectual slavery; but they were not roused to a fighting mood by the burning of books they had never read or even heard of. The persecution of the Jews was admittedly disgraceful, but they noticed that many German

Jews were wealthy and that Hitler was not afraid to harry millionaires. There was full employment in Nazi Germany and a powerful drive for workers' houses and workers' holidays. The Nazi regime was brutal, no doubt, but—had they not been taught that British Imperialism was infamously and incurably brutal? The German worker was deprived of an effective vote; but when was the British worker's vote effective? At any rate, it was impossible to pretend for long that Hitler was a mere catspaw of the capitalist class. It seemed that capitalism and the Army aristocracy had met their match; they danced to the tune of the Little Corporal. Hitlerism was bad, but it was not all bad. That was a very common working-class judgement.

If the attraction of equality induced a compensating apathy towards the destruction of bourgeois liberties, progressive propagandists had reason to be dismayed, but they had only themselves to thank. They had said more than they meant and had played with heresies to their own creed; and the bad lessons they had taught had been well learned in the wrong quarters. *C'est par la tête que le poisson pourrit.*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### FRATERNITY

**A** PARIS lying-in hospital had an excellent inscription on the outside wall: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, Maternité.* Of the four ideas, the last was by much the most solid: it was a reminder that, in spite of all the triumphs of emancipation, the most highly respected woman in the world is Mrs. Jack Dionne. The vaguest of the ideas was Fraternity.

Fraternity was never a very definite political object. Liberty and equality appeared to be ends attainable by concrete measures. Break the shackles of feudal dominance and depose the clerical tyranny (so ran the argument) and you would get liberty. Abolish privilege, rank, title and, perhaps, property,<sup>1</sup> and you would get

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire said Liberty and Property was 'the cry of Nature.' Proudhon said: 'Property is theft.' A man who owns both thinkers as ancestors finds himself in a family quarrel.



equality. But it was difficult to reduce the achievement of fraternity to a programme of practical measures. It was hoped that men, once freed and made equal, would spontaneously embrace each other. Brotherly love was assumed to be an immensely powerful natural instinct, only held in check by a variety of obstacles. Remove the obstacles, and the natural goodness of mankind would do the rest.

But, in the effort to remove the obstacles to fraternity, methods were adopted which were not fraternal; '*À la lanterne*' is not a cry of brotherhood. Worse, concentration on liberty and equality bred an interior spirit which was the enemy of fraternity. Brothers, when they are really brotherly, do not regard the advancement of one among them with a jealous and hostile eye. They do not resent, deny or endeavour to suppress a natural superiority, or even grudge each other a stroke of pure, unmerited good fortune. Admittedly, there have been brothers who took a class-conscious view of fraternity, but they are not remembered with pleasure. Cain was an egalitarian; the brothers of Joseph made a strong stand against privilege.

Certainly, revolution, which is the extreme of civil war, does not breed an atmosphere of love. When M. Leon Blum was called upon to defend the inclusion of the French Radical Party in the Popular Front, he based his defence on the fact that the Radicals were not like the milk-and-water Liberals of England, but were heirs of three revolutions, and, presumably, were game for a fourth. It seemed to be an excessive number of revolutions. A revolution which is not final is a failure. One revolution is understandable, but the thing must not become a habit. It is just possible that you might improve relations in the home by jumping on your brother and bringing him heavily to the ground, with injury to his person. If you do this once, in conditions of patent emergency, you might reduce his pretensions, and, conceivably, convince him of moral error. But to do it three times and to roll up your sleeves for a fourth attempt is to put a strain on family trust and confidence which human nature is too weak to bear. Revolution is tolerable to the imagination as a desperate effort to achieve a final equilibrium. But revolution as a cyclic phenomenon is not tolerable at all.

A mechanical view of liberty is damaging to fraternity; a mechanical view of equality is fatal to it. Fraternity and the class war are opposite conceptions. British trade union leaders,

to do them justice, showed no great eagerness to adopt Marxian extremities of hard hostility. They had worked to have their unions accepted as an important and reputable 'interest' in society, not to forge a weapon for the destruction of that society. It was the intellectual element of Socialism which popularized the theory and the atmosphere of the class-war. They succeeded in making Socialism the only possible doctrine for any trade union leader to profess, but they did not succeed in making violence attractive. The low degree of zeal for the grim clash of the classes was very clearly shown in the General Strike. That disastrous challenge was inspired by generous motives; and yet it was bound to fail. However it was led, the strike would have failed; for the unions simply did not have the weight of fire to conquer in the battle they had undertaken. But if the attack had been much more powerful than it proved to be, it still would have failed, because the leaders did not want it to succeed. They found themselves in a false position, (partly because of their own loose talk in the past), and there was no happy escape for them. They knew that the collapse of the strike was certain to weaken their authority and to devastate the ranks of the unions, but a possible success had implications that were even more disastrous. So the strike lasted for a week, and its bad results are still with us. Like so many of our diplomatic disasters, it was caused by easy talk and a merely verbal logic tempting leaders to a policy which they had neither the will nor the means to pursue with effect.

British trade union leaders had no burning desire to destroy capitalist society, because they had built for themselves a very satisfactory status inside that society. In a classless Socialist state their technique, laboriously acquired, would be largely pointless and out of date, and their habit of mind might be a positive nuisance. The failure of the strike must have disappointed the Socialists of Europe, just as it disappointed our own rootless intellectuals; but they would not have been disappointed if they had understood the peculiar character of the British working-class movement. Its roots are religious, philanthropic and moralistic, in a quite narrow bourgeois way. Dissent, Temperance and Samuel Smiles have all left their mark on the movement. A prominent Socialist said only ten years ago that there were three things marked for extinction by the public conscience, and these things were drink, gambling and war. Only a

British (or American) Socialist could think of these three things together. Against war, they are on the side of the angels, but against drink and gambling they are on the side of Gradgrind and the insurance companies. Only in the British House of Commons could a member tell his fellows that he was sure they all wanted to win the war, but not, he hoped, at the expense of making youth military-minded. Mr. Cove, who made that remarkable statement, would feel morally uncomfortable on a barricade.

It is a thousand pities that the British labour movement allowed itself to be lectured into adopting the claptrap of international Socialism. To say that the British working man has more in common with a French or German worker than he has with a British bourgeois is sentimental nonsense. He does not in the least understand the mind of the Continental proletariat. The political passions and extremities created by real, philosophical anti-clericalism are so foreign to the British worker that he cannot understand the thing or even accept that it exists. So when he reads of wholesale destruction of life and property or sweeping overthrow of tradition brought about by violence, he feels there must be some 'explanation' other than the reality of 'a lodged hate and a certain loathing.' That was particularly obvious during the Spanish war. The average Briton could not imagine that the attack on the Church was anything but an accident, with no lasting significance. Lord Wedgwood, who explained that Spain had not yet reached the high cultural level of a class-war, but was engaged in the preliminary *Kirchenkampf*, showed a real affinity with Continental anti-clericalism; but in this, as in many other matters, he did not speak for the British worker. The British Labour Party is as characteristically British as the House of Lords.

Yet it is for the sake of fraternity with people who do not speak the same language even when they use the same words that the reality of national unity has been derided and effectively weakened. There is nothing in the condition of the workers to make them more cosmopolitan and international in mind than the bourgeois; there is much to make them less. They are more likely to be deeply set in local and national ways and to be less tolerant of surprising or awkward differences. No number of resolutions by the First, Second, Third or Fourth Internationals can make any difference to that fact. Indeed, proletarian



fraternity has proved to be not merely a failure, but a farce. The Internationale had to become the national tune of Russia before it gathered military glory. The true internationalist is an intellectual *déraciné* like M. André Gide. He abandoned Communism in disgust because he visited Russia and, instead of finding the ideal citizen of the world, he found a pig-headed and provincial Jefferson Brick. But there was nothing surprising in what he found. A Russian who was bred to believe that Communism was to all other systems as white is to black must inevitably have become proud of the contemporary national achievement. The knowledge that Communism collapsed in all other countries was bound to breed national self-satisfaction, if it did not breed self-distrust. Self-distrust was out of the question (the Government saw to that) and self-satisfaction inevitably spread backwards to include the greatness of Russia's past. Stalin, who never despised the strength of national feeling, has evidently encouraged it, with much profit and success; so that the Russian propaganda which reaches us is considerably more nationalistic than our own. The theory of the class-war made Communist Russia to be the only civilized country in the world, and the jealous privacy of Russian life ruled out the test of fact; so that Russian nationalism had an inevitably chauvinistic tinge, which must have been disconcerting to the resident pensioners of the Comintern.

If Russian nationalism proved a surprise and disappointment, nobody had ever any excuse for being surprised by the depth and arrogance of Nazi nationalism. It was nationalism of that worst and perverted type, which denies its own validity by trampling on the rights of other nations. Hitler's moral justification is, of course, the claim of the *Herrenvolk*. Race theory is ugly, offensive and ridiculous; but it resolves a dilemma which is causing much present perplexity. It is generally believed that the present trend of economic development demands ever larger economic units, and that we are passing into an era when economic necessity will make it quite simply impossible to maintain national frontiers, national laws, customs barriers or any other expressions of national sovereignty which stand in the way of integral development of a natural economic area. This may or may not be true. It is very likely untrue, but it is generally accepted and is, indeed, advanced as gospel by the increasingly influential school of writers who maintain that the Nazi Revolution is the real



revolution after all, and will shape the future in the fundamental things whether Germany wins or loses the war, and whether we like it or not. But, however strong the economic drive against the rights of nations may be, there can be no doubt that national feeling is still a very strong contrary force. How to reconcile national aspirations with economic advantage is a deadly dilemma for those who entertain equal respect for both. Hitler's resolution is to equate economic advantage with German advantage, and national rights with German rights. The class-war internationalist makes a parallel equation when he exalts the rights of the proletarian Herrenvolk. He believes, of course, that there will be happiness for all when the severities of the violent transition period have passed away. But, no doubt, many a Nazi honestly believes that the subject peoples will be comfortable and contented once they have made up their minds to accept German domination. If economic advantage were indeed the one. irresistible force, the thing might quite possibly be true.

There is this to be said for Hitler, as a practical man. He knew that vigour, fortitude and unity sprang from national feeling and he inflamed German feeling, while he strove to weaken the national spirit of other lands. He knew also that only force would completely overcome national feeling in other countries, and he so applied force. No doubt the force was misapplied, grotesquely disproportioned and largely unsuccessful. He may have varied cajolery and brutality in such a way as to defeat the end of both. His tactics may have been completely bad. We do not know and have no means of knowing how far that is true. But there is one thing it is important for our own future safety to recognize. Perhaps the destruction of national sovereignty cannot be done with force; it certainly cannot be done by any other means.

If unity springs from national feeling, disunity is created by class feeling. France has provided a tragic and surely final proof of that fact. We have been deafened by assertions that French capitalists were more antagonistic to the French workers than they were to Hitler; but there has been a tactful absence of stress on the fact that large masses of the French workers showed a complementary folly in their own antagonisms. Both sides were thinking as internationalists. That is to say, they were thinking foolishly and weakly and to disastrous result. It is not likely that French capitalists have found their German counterparts to be

economic brothers. French workers have certainly not found German workers to be very sympathetic friends, and they did a very bad day's work for the Russians when they imagined they were assisting them by standing as sullen witnesses of France's collapse.

Once again, the fraternity of the workers proved an immense advantage to a military invader. Internationalism remained weak, but it made nationalism weak also. Unity between the proletariat of the nations was not achieved, but disunity within the nations was achieved. *Kameradschaft*, one of the most effective pieces of internationalist propaganda, was a German film. It told the story of two mines, one French, one German, divided only by an iron grille, which symbolized the arbitrary division of brother from brother imposed by the master class. There was a disaster in the French mine, and the German workers, acting like good internationalists, invaded French territory and helped in the rescue work. But, when all was over, the grille was replaced. The master class had reimposed their cruel sovereignty and division.. Such propaganda with its bold simplification and sentimental appeal was very well designed to weaken the national feeling of the French workers, not to mention of the intellectuals, if that needed any weakening. The sequel to *Kameradschaft* could be produced any day, now. The grille is down and French and Germans are working together. But the French workers have found a new master class. Large numbers, indeed, have found themselves German.

Internationalism breeds weakness. Nationalism breeds strength. It is only by recovering her unity as a nation that France can recover anything at all. National fraternity is limited, but it is real. International fraternity is pure delusion. If British workers entertain kindly feelings towards German workers because they believe all workers are the same, there will be an explosion at the first contact. If they recognize that German (or Russian) workers are different, simply because they are foreign, there will be a chance, at least, of tolerable amity. On the long term it is folly to put our European propaganda on a class basis. It is folly because such propaganda appeals to those elements which are either the weakest in will or the most treacherous in purpose. The weak are the Socialists, the treacherous are the Communists. (French Communists did not betray France any more than German Communists betrayed Communism.)

Yet, those who call themselves enthusiasts for Political Warfare are almost invariably enthusiasts for revolutionary propaganda. Mr. H. G. Wells expressed their inmost feelings when he said that the war was not worth winning unless we made it a war for the revolutionary elements of Europe. With inconceivable irresponsibility, he called upon Catholics in the allied nations to depose the Pope and to approve of an air attack on the Vatican. If they failed to do that, he, Mr. Wells, would hardly consider them to be honest partners in the war for freedom. He was even so lost in dreams as to hope for a virile and darc-devil movement among the Italian Liberals.

But though his irresponsibility is astounding, it is not complete. Though he is unaware of realities in Italy, he is acutely aware of realities at home. It should be obvious that the revolutionary elements of Europe will not accept us as honest partners in revolution unless we give some proof of stern good will comparable to the proof that Mr. Wells demands of Catholics. Mr. Wells might offer to abolish the orthodox public school system; but that system is not perhaps well understood among Bulgarian Communists and its abolition would not light many fires of enthusiasm. He might offer to abolish the House of Lords; but its functions are certainly not clearly grasped, and possibly its existence is not even known among the restless spirits of Galicia. But there is one simple and dramatic thing which all revolutionaries do understand, and that is 'Death to Kings.' If Mr. Wells wants to set the European underworld on fire he should strive honestly, openly and persistently to secure the abolition of the British monarchy. But Mr. Wells will not try that. The evil consequences of an open and strenuous campaign for republicanism are only too clear to his mind because they would fall upon himself. The evil consequences of attempting to dethrone the Pope do not oppress Mr. Wells, for they would not directly and immediately affect him. There he thinks like an Italian Liberal. But when it comes to action which would affect his own position and influence, he thinks timidly; again like an Italian Liberal. More harm than good would be done, we must hasten slowly; we must not wantonly flout a widely held prejudice, there are more immediate tasks before us . . . *Les femmes sont très braves avec la peau d'autrui.*

Few men are so frank as Mr. Wells in endeavouring to turn the oldest instincts of Europe against us; but the men who think



the war can be won by pamphlets and speeches called political warfare seem unable to understand that their activities may be immensely harmful, that their support of revolution for revolution's sake is simply a stubborn effort to perpetuate that disunity which brought the subject nations down and which, if not mended, will keep them helpless prey. Many, though not all, of the refugees, and all of the exiled soldiers now serving with us, must wonder if they have come to a madhouse when they hear reputedly responsible men ask if the war is worth winning at all without the justification of a revolution. Deportation, the mass murder of hostages, sacrilege, the trampling insolence of conquest, the extinction of whole communities and the destruction of rooted cultures—to put an end to these things seems war aim enough to those who have suffered from them; but not to our comfortable clerks.

Much more must the achievement of liberation seem enough to those who still suffer from tyranny. It is to be hoped that the progressive notion of political warfare has not crossed the sea, to insult the millions in their misery. In September, 1939, Poles tuned into the B.B.C. to hear the word of aid and deliverance, and were insulted by jazz tunes. Are they to be insulted again with political propaganda? Are the Norwegian clergy to be sustained by anti-clerical exhortations? Are the Greeks to be promised a federal union with Bulgaria, Italy and Germany as partners, and a pogrom against the Metaxas party?

It appears that the toughest opposition to the New Order has been offered by the forces of nationalism and religion, forces against which the projected revolution will infallibly be directed. It may be that Communists are now making a formidable resistance, but it is conditional and therefore unreliable. The French Communists who occasionally stab a German soldier in the back are doing a little to level their own score, for they had already stabbed the French Army in the back. It suits Hitler to exaggerate the part played by Communists in popular resistance, and it seems to suit our ideologues just as well.

No doubt there are many men using the Communist organization in an honest and single-minded effort to free France, but these are Communists who have rediscovered their nationality. In so far as they are fighting for France and not for a class, they are bad Communists; in so far as they are fighting for France and not for Russia they are bad party members. But they are good



Frenchmen. They are, presumably, working with class enemies and bitter political opponents, their differences forgotten for the moment, in the common cause. It is to be hoped that the highly peculiar Communist conception of collaboration has also been forgotten.

The instinct of national patriotism is one of respectable value and respectable age. But religious faith is a more ancient and a wider thing. Patriotism has inspired men to stand against the moral evil of Hitlerism in France and all the other subject countries. But only religion has inspired men to speak against the evil in Germany itself. That religious leaders should have spoken louder and more clearly is often urged by those whose own leaders have not spoken at all. It should be remembered that leaders are rather helpless without followers. If the German bishops have only a little flock of completely faithful followers, Hitler may thank himself, in part. But he can thank more heartily the propaganda of a hundred and fifty years which made it an intellectual axiom that the Church must be deposed from all authority over the public acts of men and society. This deposition was urged and it was done in the name of liberty, equality and fraternity. Under the shock of war, the fraternity of the arts and sciences faded instantly 'as breath into the wind.' Hitler is not afraid of the professors; he has the students on his side. The fraternity of the proletariat disappeared as fast. Hitler is not afraid of the proletariat; he has the working-class on his side. The only fraternity which has survived at all is the fraternity of the long derided and insufficient minority who call all men brothers because they are all the children of God.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE MONKEY'S PAW

**T**HE completeness with which religion has been deposed from public authority should teach the progressive what he does not understand, that many of his most cherished aims have been very largely reached. Nothing annoyed the liberal eighteenth century mind more than the cramping and

suppression of free enquiry by the intolerant authority of dominant religious ideas; nothing, indeed, annoyed it so much. The case of Calas was bad, but the true clerk could hardly help feeling that the cases of Galileo and Bruno were worse in their effect; for truth was killed dead in the eye.

*Nous avons changé tout cela.* Darwin suffered a good deal of unpleasantness in controversy, but the question of suppression did not arise. Any man who adopts or invents a theory hostile to tradition and expounds it with plausibility and persistence need only live to a respectable middle-age to be assured of public honour, or, at the very least, of complete tolerance. It is considered disgraceful that any University professor should even be asked whether he wishes to destroy, sustain or reform the culture he professes. A man is asked to subordinate his own particular aptitudes to nothing more strict and definite than 'the rights of others,' which means merely the right of others to cultivate their aptitudes in moderate comfort. There must be no excessive jostling in the mob.

Liberty to hold a technical or limited end as an ultimate has led to some startling results.

Voltaire made the world ring with the name of Calas. The French law found Calas guilty of a horrible murder, and put him to death. Voltaire said that the law had yielded to religious pressure Calas being a Protestant, and he struggled, successfully, to have Calas's name cleared. Victor Hugo denounced the *coup d'état* which installed Louis Napoleon as a crime, because a constitution had been betrayed, and betrayed by Louis Napoleon who, as President, had sworn to defend it. Zola raised the old cry of justice for Dreyfus, victim of anti-Semitism and of Army procedure; justice, he said, was suborned because the rights of the accused were subordinated to the interests of the Army. In the direct line of succession of these men who stood for the integrity of the law stood the celebrated American Liberal lawyer, Clarence Darrow, hero of a hundred Radical battles for the down-trodden in the Courts, the opponent of intolerance and oppression, the Voltaire of Monkeyville. What did Clarence Darrow say of justice? 'The litigants and their lawyers are supposed to want justice, but, in reality, there is no such thing as justice, whether in or out of court. In fact, the word cannot be defined. So, for lack of proof, let us assume that the word justice has a meaning, and that the common idea of the definition is correct, without

even seeking to find out what is the common meaning. Then, how do we reach justice through the courts? The lawyer's idea of justice is a verdict for his client, and really this is the sole end for which he aims.' Through the efforts of Voltaire, Calas was rehabilitated. It would seem that Clarence Darrow was concerned to rehabilitate his prosecutor.

The very crudity of Clarence Darrow's mind emphasises the fundamental antinomianism of his kind. 'I have always been a lawyer for the defence,' he said. 'I can think of nothing, not even war, that has brought so much misery to the human race as prisons. And all of it so futile!' It is quite characteristic that he compared the misery of prisons with the misery of war and not with the misery of crime. Clarence Darrow was not, of course, the highest type of lawyer. His philosophisings were on the level of bar parlour moralisings towards closing time, and his prose had a decided flavour of the luscious Robert Ingersoll.

Nonetheless he won international renown. He was a professional protestor, a Man of the People, a soldier of progress. His predecessors fought with tongue and pen to ensure that the Law should bow to no master, and that lawyers should serve only the Law. They produced Darrow, who would have rejected the title 'servant of the law' with honest indignation. He was a technician. He practised an art which was a self-contained activity. Beyond that he was nothing more helpful than a sentimentalist. He believed that delinquency was always a disease and that the real business of courts was to discover the cause of the disease. They would then 'learn how to remove the cause.' Medical science had told him this much; it had not told him about incurable disease. But even these reflections and ideals were for his leisure hours, the grave musings of a Justice Holmes or Pollock. On the job he was a lawyer, and a lawyer's God is his client. There is no other God.

A struggle to secure the complete freedom of the due process of law led, in Darrow, to rejection of the law. Belief that Reason, untrammelled by superstition or censorship would lead men to see the hollowness of all fallacies were once widely held and hotly argued. But the most fashionable thinkers now hold that Reason has exposed the hollowness of Reason; a sad conclusion. Science is in rather better case, for Science has not yet exposed the hollowness of science. Spam, the cinema, refrigerators and

artificial silk are objects of unquestionable value. Yet we have learned that the gifts of science may be embarrassing.

The young scientist-reformer is one of Mr. Wells's most unlikely anticipations. The pure scientist, the research worker, must, of course, be free from the faintest shadow of interference. It is the business of an enlightened society to maintain him at his work, to ask no questions and to take what he gives. The gifts are apt to be incidental. One of Mr. Wells's earlier heroes compared the studious and rapt scientist to a man busily engaged on some work of his own and throwing presents over his shoulder. Tramcars were one of the presents he mentioned ; great ships of light, he called them. But Mr. Wells expects that the pure reasonableness, the order, the tidiness, the disinterestedness of scientific work will have a general effect on the mind, and that the young research worker, lifting his head from his test tubes, will be struck with the confusion and pointless ugliness of the modern world and filled with zeal for drastic change.

Unfortunately, if a man is encouraged to believe that the satisfaction of his own instincts is all that he owes in the way of public duty to mankind, it cannot be confidently expected that he will spontaneously accept a more general and more generous duty. Young scientists who cast a bewildered and indignant eye on the muddle of modern affairs are very common in Mr. Wells's novels, but not in life. The research scholar is not, as a rule, anxious to destroy the capitalist who threw him a foundation scholarship over *his* shoulder. On the same principle as he resents any interference by the capitalist, he is disinclined to do any interfering himself. If he is provided with moderate comforts and an opportunity to pursue his studies, he is content to let the world go by. 'There cannot be much wrong with a society which made possible the rise either of J. H. Thomas or Edgar Wallace, that gave "Jamie Brown" the status of uncrowned king in Scotland and put Robertson at the head of the War Office.' That was the judgement of Edgar Wallace. It cannot be said to be the last word on the social problem, but that is about as far as many a young scientist cares to go. Of course, the young scientist does not want Brown's crownless kingdom, and he would not know what to do with Wallace's fifty thousand pounds a year (nor did Wallace) ; but he does know what he does want and, if he gets it, is very likely to take the world for granted.

Absorbed in the study of Nature, he produces prophylactics



and poison with the indifference of Nature herself. He has done much for our material comfort, but when he throws things over his shoulder in these dark days, we prepare to duck. Yet Mr. Wells has lived to see the day when his ideal of the citizen scientist has become real, if not in great numbers. If most scientists are content to offer a bored acquiescence to the dreary orthodoxy of the existing order, a few are ready to lend their enthusiasm to great movements for change, for planning, for eminent tidiness. Such a one is the inventive Willy Messerschmitt. His views do not please Mr. Wells, but he is undoubtedly a man of fertile and original mind and he has lent his gifts to a government which has a high respect for order. The aeroplane fighter is a positive treasure of neatness, ingenuity and economy of design. It cannot be denied that the Messerschmitt is scientific product of the highest order. It cannot be denied that its designer is a man of large views.

Mr. Wells wrote a picture called *The Shape of Things to Come*. I was careful not to see this picture, but it seems that there is a scene in which young aviators, determined to put an end to international anarchy, descend from the sky and inform startled civilians that they are 'Wings over the World.' In spite of that inconclusive and rather pointless remark, Mr. Wells very likely thought long and deeply over his picture; but it is not likely that he thought of Hess. The man who did use this very modern technique did not use it to further Mr. Wells's ideas.

It has never been considered good that financiers should be absorbed in the technique of their job. Financiers have been blamed for thinking, like Clarence Darrow, that the client is always right. It has been considered the greatest of modern crimes that the paralysing power of finance should be free from the control of a larger morality. The world prayed for a truly enlightened financier who did not think in terms of smart deals and marble bathrooms, but would prop up falling currencies and assist the cause of peace and liberal government by large loans at the right time. The world got him. His name was Ivar Kreuger. He was a modest, worried, enlightened man. He sold matches. If he had a fault, he charged rather too much for his matches and rather too much for his loans. But nobody pressed the criticism home. After all, his commitments were enormous, and he probably needed a large margin of what it would be merely offensive to call profit. His worries grew too much for him, and

he shot himself in a Paris hotel. The B.B.C. sponsored a threnody on this remarkable man which was composed and spoken with real emotion by a distinguished economist, well known to all. But the tempo of modern life is so fast that by the time *The Listener* was ready for printing it was felt advisable to prune the lament of some of its exuberance, for it had already appeared that this particular match seller was by no means so innocent as the Hans Andersen match seller who perished by the neglect of the world. He had a collection of rubber stamps, faithfully copying the signatures of other great financiers who were so unenlightened as to be likely to refuse to sign all the documents which most urgently needed their signature. It appeared also that his accounts were edited by sea captains or persons of a like standard of statistical training, and that he used his international talents to drive his modest coach and four through all the company laws of Europe. Like so many other citizens of the world, Kreuger was a swindler. The thought is sad, but the corollary is frightening. If Kreuger were alive at the end of this war, and enjoying the position in public esteem that he was enjoying when he shot himself, there would be a strong and perhaps an overpowering demand from well-informed persons that he be approved chairman of a European Finance or Currency Board. Such breadth of mind, such majesty of talent and such purity of intention would carry universal confidence, and his neutral status (if Sweden remained neutral) would ensure that he would not be a mere rubber stamp for the vindictive decisions of the conquerors.

Again, progressives have often complained that in one sphere the influence of obscurantist religion is still very powerful and reactionary; that is, the sphere of education. Within the State system, Catholic and Church of England schools smother the lively intellects of millions of the young, and almost all public schools are propaganda stations for one denomination or another. Universities are relatively free, but the managers of schools still exercise the ancient and intolerable tyranny of asking prospective teachers what they intend to teach. They order these things better in France, or, rather, they ordered them. There the teacher was of immense importance. In country districts he was a functionary of the Radical or Socialist parties. He taught youth by the pure light of reason and filled them with unprejudiced and tolerant wisdom which left them believing in nothing in particular and greatly assisted Germany in conquering the country

in a month. French teachers were sensitive to any accusation of chauvinism. They taught peace and international friendship. They were not to be deceived by any imperialist rant about your country right or wrong, and they left their pupils with a general impression that if their country was not entirely wrong, it was at least not at all likely to be right. Many of them were very manly and firm about clerical interference. They would have none of that kind of tyranny in or near the school. It is to be hoped that they are equally firm with the Germans.

The results of a secular education in Germany have been rather different. The German youth which has been freed from the shackles of Christianity have turned, instead, to Odin and Thor. It must never be forgotten that the vast majority of Nazis were educated, in a thoroughly liberal code. They seem to be no less enthusiastic for the cult of race and blood than the lads who have gone through the Nazi curriculum. The German Government has been much more enlightened than any democracy in encouraging foreign travel. Progressives have strongly urged that governments should subsidise foreign travel, so that the peoples should get to know and understand each other; to know is to love. Germany sent out large numbers of young tourists, not only before the war but during it, and these youths set themselves to work very busily to know and to understand the countries they visited. They identified themselves with the inhabitants and were sometimes indistinguishable from them. When the shooting began, these industrious young Germans proved very dangerous.

It has often been said that the world would be a cleaner and saner place if women were freed from the tyranny of the home and of masculine authority. The enfranchisement of women has proved most helpful to the Conservative party, and the new liberation from childbirth and the curse of large families has left us with a finer and more independent womanhood—and a race that is growing older every year and slowly perishing.

Nowhere did authority exert itself more stupidly, more arrogantly and more snobbishly than in military circles. We looked anxiously for a truly democratic army, one that was adaptable, scientific and run with a ruthless disregard of social claims. We looked for an army where the relationship between officer and man was warmed with human sympathy and an admission of fundamental equality; an army that was not bound to text book rules and equipped with archaic weapons; an army



that combined the martial virtues with the highest degree of modern efficiency and organization; an army that was not a useless anachronism in peace and a swollen muddle in war; an adjustable army, a flexible army, an army that was an expression of a whole nation's ideals and intelligence and will. We found it in the German Army.

Germany has answered many of our prayers. We complained about senseless and wasteful competition in trade. Germany put an end to that. We called for a planned economy. Germany got one. We asked that physical toil should have the highest honour possible. Germany introduced physical toil into the curriculum of the best education. We thought that the highest posts should be open to the lowest. So did Hitler. We were infuriated by correct, stuffed-shirt, upper-class diplomats, so Hitler gave us Ribbentrop. We said the semi-feudal misgovernment of Poland should be ended. Hitler ended it.

France also has met some of our most anxious demands, but that was only justice; for France had a bad record of reaction. For years the world groaned under the implacable pedantry of Poincaré. Cries of mercy for Germany, of human understanding and sympathy and imagination, warnings of disaster and prophecies of doom all died away before that stony face. *Au fur et à mesure*. He took his stand on the Treaty of Versailles. Like Shylock, he would yield nothing that was not in the bond. He sowed hatred and ploughed it in. He reduced liberal Germany to despair and Lord Curzon to indignant tears. He was a Verdun of vindictiveness, a Gibraltar of harsh legality. It began to seem that he was only too faithfully representative of the true spirit of an unrelenting France, watching for the first signs of returning life in her enfeebled foe to leap at her throat. The great work of restoring German self-respect and of putting her great metal and chemical industries once again on a sound foundation left him not merely cold, but hostile. Collaboration was hateful to him.

Fortunately for the good name of France, and none too soon, there arose a statesman who admitted that he had never read the Treaty of Versailles, and did not give a snap of his supple fingers for anything it said. Germany was self-evidently a great and neighbouring nation; that was enough for him. His appearance might have gone against him in class-conscious England, for his teeth were less than pearly and his tie was not of any school. Fortunately, these little eccentricities attracted



only amused affection in France. Not strongly attached to any party, he had friends in all. He was picturesque, friendly, vivacious, socially democratic, and a fervent advocate of peace. He is said to have told his intimates that his one governing principle as Foreign Minister was never to sign a mobilization paper. He had no room for any other principles; but no one could say that this worthy man should bear the faintest shadow of blame for a war whose approach he regarded with horror. His name is Laval. His motto is Collaboration.

Yet it cannot be said that Laval is completely satisfactory. If his purpose was always noble, it was sometimes infirm. His sympathy and adaptability, which made him so deservedly popular in the *république des camerades*, yet endowed him with some of the weaknesses of that most progressive institution. Too ready to see every point of view, he sometimes forgot to be sufficiently strong in pressing his own. The wisdom of accepting Germany's outstretched hand was always apparent to him, but he hesitated till the hard lesson of catastrophic events had strengthened his own. If it was not then too late, it was very nearly so; for he would hardly care to deny that in the partnership, German influence preponderates to a high degree.

Laval anticipated events and then accepted them. It took a stronger man to shape them. It took a man who was big enough to defy the petty bigotries of national pride and sovereignty, a man who could foresee the remaking of Europe as one organization and who could will his share in that great task, not only for himself, but also for his country. Which is the better patriot, the man who struggles to keep his country in sulky and impotent solitude, or the man who strives to make it part of an infinitely greater and more splendid order, an order able to confer rich material benefits, in time, to guarantee absolute security and to offer some share, however small, in the lordship of the world? There can be only one enlightened answer. The true patriot is the man who defies the angry clamour of the mob and breaks down the fence of the wretched cabbage patch they call their native land. The true patriot is an internationalist, a man who could not love his land so much loved he not order more. He is Quisling.

Quisling is not popular. His rugged Scandinavian virtues are not appreciated at all. That is not surprising. In *An Enemy of the People* his compatriot Ibsen described the obloquy and

positive violence which must be expected by any progressive man who openly opposes the parochial point of view. Quisling is said to be undemocratic because he opposes the people for their own good, but Ibsen's doctor did the same. If his methods are rough, he has many progressive precedents behind him and the support of very distinguished contemporary example. He fills all the specifications of an international man.

He may not be what we wanted, but he is certainly what we asked for. He is a man, take him for all in all, we may look upon many of his like again.

## CHAPTER TEN

### QUISLING

---

"I will weep for thee,  
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like  
Another fall of man."

*Henry V.*

**T**HE word 'quisling' was a happy and necessary addition to the language, but it is rapidly becoming debased and useless. 'Quisling' is being used freely as a synonym for 'traitor.' Thus Rashid Ali was a quisling, and U-Saw was a quisling and Lindbergh was an unconscious quisling. Anyone is a quisling who interferes with our war necessities. (Lindbergh was called a 'copperhead.' His father, in the last war, was called a 'disloyal snake' for being an Isolationist.)

There is possibly a degree of subconscious deliberateness in the blurring of the meaning of the useful word. It is everywhere admitted that a quisling is a traitor, but there is a strong disinclination to remember and admit that he is a special and rather unusual kind of traitor. Benedict Arnold was not a quisling, but Benjamin Franklin's son was, from the point of view of Benjamin Franklin. He was a British Governor, and he remained one all through the War of Independence. He probably believed quite sincerely that the local advantage of the colonies should be subordinated to the wider interests of the Empire, and, perhaps, of humanity at large. A quisling is a traitor from conviction. He is a man who finds his country's way of life so repugnant that he prefers the disadvantages of foreign invasion; though, of course, he may find personal advantage in an invasion.

A quisling is a man who is strongly attracted to a New Order. He conceives the benefits of the New Order to be much greater than the benefits of national sovereignty. He does not sell himself to an army. He sells himself to an idea. Kuussinen was a model quisling.

It is not possible that a man can be sincerely attracted by the prospect of mere conquest by a foreign power. If he works for that end, he works for money or some other personal advantage, or for spite, like Coriolanus. But Quisling seems to have been sincerely attracted by the German idea; by the social and economic revolution and perhaps by the Nordic myth. As assistant to Nansen in Russian relief work, he had experience of international co-operation for high humanitarian purposes. No doubt the relief committee found national and customs barriers a nuisance. Famine relief could have been much more simply carried out if all Europe had been one economic unit and largely socialized. He is credited with having shown a favourable inclination towards Communism, which may or not be true, but is certainly not intrinsically improbable. Apparently the Nazi revolution satisfied his social instincts, and he made the great sacrifice of Norwegian independence.

Quisling is a symptom of a sick order. No order is safe from the merely mercenary traitor, or the man inspired by motives of personal revenge; but in a healthy order, the differences are less deep than the unity, and men will not betray, except for gain. But to Quisling it was more important to be a National Socialist than it was to be a Norwegian. It is conceivable that Russia might produce Fifth Columnists, but hardly quislings. There is nothing in Nazism to attract, overwhelmingly, either the Russian who loves Communism or the Russian who hates it. The authentic Fifth Columnist is a reactionary; but the quisling is progressive. Those who merely wish to destroy Communism and to restore some shadow of the old regime might assist the Germans. But no man bred in Stalinist Communism will find in National Socialism a sufficiently new and challenging way of life to tempt him to treachery.

The civilization which produces quislings is a civilization with a loose and weakening grip. It has subjects who not merely dislike it, and are unhappy within it, but who positively despise it. In two senses a quisling holds his country cheap. He looks abroad and finds a rule and a social philosophy which, he feels, will

make him happy. Mr. Victor Gollancz did not feel personally at ease till he got to Russia; but he should have reflected that Baillie-Stuart (the Spy in the Tower) did not feel personally at ease till he got to Germany.

The appearance of quislings should cause as much uneasiness in a state as the appearance of a leak does in a ship. The common faith which holds men together in a nation, the sense of common purpose, has failed. It has failed to appeal to affection or to the ordinary decencies of loyalty; it has failed even to touch the sense of shame. The community of a nation is, at the best, very imperfect. It is gashed by religious, political and economic differences; but in a community which is tolerably healthy, the gashes never go right through. Public danger, very near and acutely realized, makes men realize that their community is more important than their grievances, however just. The loyalty which replies to danger is very often blind, excessive and bigoted. But it is useful. When that loyalty fails, even with a few, the spiritual power of a nation is running down; its lamps are dimming.

What, besides ambition and revenge, tempts a man to sell his country? The attraction of Communism is comprehensible. After all, Communism did pretend to be international; it offered the domination of a group (the proletariat), to which it was theoretically possible for any man in any country to adhere. Everywhere it recruited victims of maladjustment, mostly poor and some rich, but all at odds with society. In view of the at least nominal attractions of Communism, there is something significant in the numbers and nature of the strict British adherents. There are millions of British subjects who are blindly attached to Russia, but they are few indeed who join the party or even vote for Communist candidates. The final submission sticks in their throats. Communism, they feel, is not for import and, anyway, they do not like to be ordered about by a caucus.

Those who do join the party are mostly paranoiacs. They think that society drastically undervalues them, and society is therefore corrupt. They are anti-social; they are worried about themselves. (The temporary alliance of Communist and Pacifist in 1939 was logically indefensible, but, psychologically, it was not unnatural. Both parties were self-regarding.) The world in which they live is a cruelly distorting mirror which throws them back a grotesque misrepresentation of themselves.



Only in their ideal world of Communism can they see themselves as they believe they really are. It is therefore idle to argue with a really thorough Communist. It is not a question of attacking a conviction or a prejudice ; it is a question of attempting to destroy a man's opinion of himself, and denying the validity of the satisfactions for which he craves.

If German Communists were at all like British Communists, there was nothing at all surprising in Hitler's success in converting them. He showed them a new movement which was destructive, on the surface egalitarian, brutally vigorous and which offered them an apparently ample opportunity for revenge on the society which had cramped and ignored them. He offered also what German Communism could not offer because of its manifest incapacity, a share in power. Thaelmann might promise this or that extremity of uprooting and levelling, but Hitler seemed to promise not much less, and he was able to deliver the goods. Of course, the German Communist party was a large and therefore a diluted party. Popular Communism is always corrupt. Few of the members can have been thoroughly trained in the moral theology and doctrine of the dialectic. Therefore, the excitement of success, the temptation to lose themselves happily in violence and the mob, and a sudden glow of their hidden nationalism made them changed men. British Communists are a select body and therefore are likely to be, on the whole, real Communists. It is doubtful if anything, even a Communist regime in Britain, would reconcile them to their native land. The satisfactions they dream about will never be found on this imperfect earth. They would still feel neglected and undervalued, even under Communist rule. They would not take kindly to last-minute Communists assuming power, while they who had borne the burden and the heat of the day were left with the heat and the burden. That is what would happen, because the party leaders have shown too often and too clearly that, in large issues, they are extremely unsagacious and unpractical men. They are visionaries who have bad dreams. If the progressive school of thought has more than an ample supply of Kerenskys, the orthodox party is well stocked with potential Trotskys.

The attraction which Nazism has for some non-Germans is more disquieting than the attraction of Communism. How can any man have a genuine zeal for a political philosophy which ranks his race, and therefore himself, as inferior? Quislings

must close their eyes to many blatancies. It must take a very starved spirit to make its spiritual home in such a very superior and contemptuous family.

Yet National Socialism has captured the souls of a variety of persons. There are rich men who think that Hitler will keep the poor from doing them injustice, and poor men think that Hitler will keep the rich from doing *them* injustice. There are men who are attracted by dictatorship, others who worship the omnipotent State, and still others, perhaps the most numerous, who are attracted by order, unification and bold, huge planning. We know very little indeed of what is going on in Occupied Europe, but it would not be surprising to learn that many quislings are persons of soft character, men who had dreams of a new society, but who lacked the drive and the force to take drastic and dangerous practical action. Such men might well become Hitler's lackeys, in the same spirit as a small boy will become the lackey of a bully who will terrify his former tormentors. There are men who, lacking the will but not the wish to seize power, will take it in return for betrayal. Hitler makes men of iron out of men of straw.

But, however lowly we may think of quislings, their existence is not to be denied or lightly explained away. There is something very far wrong in the atmosphere that such a man can breathe, and for every one who is totally corrupted it is fair to assume that there are many who have some traces of infection. If the existence of quislings shows that, in some places, the gashes in national unity have gone clean through, they also indicate that in other places the unbroken unity is very thin indeed. The ideological traitor is a portent of decay.

Perhaps the greatest attraction of Hitler is not a reasoned thing at all. It may be a simple, primitive fascination with enormous power, energy, self-confidence and will. The fascination is a symptom of deficiency; it would not be felt in an atmosphere which itself had the elements of power and purpose. 'Anyway, Hitler knows what he wants,' 'He acts first and talks afterwards,' 'They don't stand any of that nonsense in Germany,' 'There's a lot of people here just asking for a dose of Hitler'—such remarks were commonplace in Britain and, no doubt, elsewhere, before the war. They were not uttered by Nazi propagandists, but by plain and honest people of all classes and all convictions who were suffused with a feeling of futility. They

did not like Hitler ; they did not admire him on moral standards : but they were impressed by his decision and depressed by their own lack of it.

The British indecision was shocking, but it was inevitable. There was division, not merely between men, but inside men. The most active political talkers held that war was the ultimate evil, and also that Nazi oppression was the ultimate evil. They held that democratic liberty was the ultimate good, and also that economic equality was the ultimate good. They accepted the principle of international sovereignty, and also the principles of the rights of nations. They held that the Germans, as Germans, were worthy and valuable citizens of the world, and also that the Germans, as Nazis, were sadistic tyrants. Conflicting principles and emotions paralysed the will. Readily believing the worst of the German Government, they were nearly as willing to believe the worst of their own. They were anxious that we should snatch the initiative from Hitler, and also that we should respect all international usages. The limit of unrealistic thinking was reached in the once popular proposal for an automatic definition of aggression. The country which took the first step across the frontier was to be regarded as the enemy of mankind, and any peaceful country, threatened with invasion, had to sit back, like a paralysed rabbit, waiting the aggressor's good time and occasion. It was a policy which might be attractive to the legal mind, but it did not show much initiative.

But there was more than confusion of thought and feeling in the Western world. There was a deep lack of enthusiasm and faith. Economic and political advances had been made. They had achieved their specific object and had failed to give a general satisfaction. Popular enthusiasm for national independence had supported the struggle for United Italy. The enthusiasm had been genuine: the result was Mussolini. The working-classes had obtained the vote, and with the vote they had made the Labour Party ; which ran into a dead end and stayed there. It was not at all a bad party. It was quite as worthy of respect as the Conservative party—but that was considerably less than had been hoped for. Women had obtained the vote, and they used it to remedy many legal and social discrepancies ; but a prominent feminist is able to say with apparent sincerity that there is as much discrimination against women in Britain as there is against negroes in America. Our most positive and undeniable material



achievements failed to bring comfort. The huge amount of rehousing done in England was a considerable performance; but popular comment was almost entirely negative. The houses were ugly, inconvenient, badly placed and rather too dear. 'Suburban neurosis' became recognized as a real and very serious complaint.

We touched nothing that did not turn to dust. Needless to say, under the surface of discontent, normal human happiness was not dead. But the land was without confident hope. Whether at home or abroad, our ambitions failed or else proved not to be worth the enthusiasm they had called up. The League of Nations disappointed the middle-class, and Russia disappointed the working-class. Russia disappointed because it was shown beyond argument that what happened in Russia would not much affect what happened here. She ceased to be a dynamic centre of revolution, and became, even to the most enthusiastic, a noble but rather far away example of the good life. She descended from the position that France had held in the eyes of the early Wordsworth to the position that the United States had held for the early Dickens—an inspiration, perhaps, but nothing more. In the years between wars, ribbon development, litter and rights of way occupied more newspaper attention than the birth rate. That is the measure of our sense of proportion and of our seriousness.

The impact of German unity, energy, audacity and confidence has been felt fully only by those peoples who have seen the Germans in their streets. That this impact has destroyed illusions is very obvious; what else it has destroyed we will discover when the war is over. Napoleon said that, though defeated, he had planted a poisoned dart in the heart of England. It may be that Hitler will say the same of Europe.

Certainly the idea of totalitarianism is attracting many who consider themselves as free-minded democrats. Each working to further his own particular interest without correction by larger ideas of the general good, they are making neat little jig-saw pieces with no idea of the whole picture, which they will find ugly and surprising. The T.U.C. wishes to have no other schools but State schools, and to compel all the youth of the country to accept the authority of these schools from infancy to early manhood. The Conservative interim report asks for religion in schools, but also for compulsory enrolment in organizations registered with the State, and with the inculcation of duty to the State. The inculcation of duty is very necessary, but the methods



suggested are not encouraging, and the State is a highly dubious conception. The Educational Institute of Scotland, as early as 1917, made this remarkable pronouncement: 'To educate its children is one of the first duties of the State. Only at its own peril can the State evade or even partially neglect its responsibility in this matter, and in no case can the State divest itself of responsibility; that is a fundamental fact which must be kept steadily in view in considering the question of local administration of education; so fundamental indeed that we must ask ourselves whether any delegation to a local Authority is either necessary or allowable on the part of the State.' Those who would put 'the family' where the Educational Institute put 'the State' would be called reactionary; but it could hardly be denied that they are farther away from Hitler.

The British Medical Association has given its voice for a State medical service, supplying the medical needs of the whole community. How far such a scheme would benefit the patient is doubtful, but there can be no question that the ordinary doctor may be led to believe that it would be beneficial to himself.<sup>1</sup> It offers security and partial freedom from tyrannical demands, and status—the status of the civil servant, which is now the most generally envied. It is said that in the early days of the occupation of Paris, the Nazis made quite an impression among the poor by just such a scheme.

Socialism is economic totalitarianism, and it is well under way. Planning is Socialism, unashamedly and totally bureaucratic. Shops are closed down, small businesses are liquidated to further a logical economic organization. Often enough, one totalitarian project implies another. Thus a report on Day Continuation Schools says: 'There is one difficulty which under the present dispensation at any rate we find insuperable. This is the problem created by the existence of the small employer and the small working unit . . . but the indispensable condition of the success of Day Continuation Schools is its universality.'<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the small business must die that the Day Continuation School may live.

Why, anyway, is it necessary that the Day Continuation scheme should be universal? Why is it taken for granted that a

<sup>1</sup> The Beveridge proposals seem to have created some chilly second thoughts on this point.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from *The Tablet*, September, 1942.

partial and voluntary scheme would collapse? There seems to be no reason, except that the boys and girls do not want to attend the schools, and it will not be easy to force them unless each unwilling pupil is assured that all others are suffering as he or she does. Many of the educationists who push these schemes with honest zeal consider, with equal honesty, that compulsory church parade is an act of tyranny. It is an eminently Nazi point of view.

The men who are perhaps most tempted by the Nazi dynamic and rationalization are those engaged in large works of material construction. Local boundaries and a multiplication of authorities enrage them, as national boundaries and national sovereignty enrage the Federal Unionist. They want to plan their roads, bridges, new houses, towns and factories without regard to local prejudices, and independently of local finance. A multiplicity of obstructions prevents them from exercising their talents to the full. Medical and the educational planners are handicapped by local differences, by sectional interests and the claims of private development and profit; but what is a hindrance and an irritation to them is a more serious frustration to the engineer. Hitler is undoubtedly the engineer's friend; he makes straight the path and uniform the gauge.

He can also make a plausible claim to be the friend of the unemployed. The work he offers may be hard and poorly paid, but it is work, and he can guarantee that all under him shall be working hard. He takes care to pay due respect to the dignity of hard and humble toil. He dramatizes manual labour and restores the honour of the essential things. Observers with a good knowledge of Germany have reported that working men were greatly consoled by the thought that their immediate bosses were as open to drastic dismissal and punishment as they were themselves. The more thoroughly workers are educated in class-consciousness, the more satisfaction they will find in that situation. Hitler has capitalized sectional resentments.

Hitler may claim with less, but sufficient, justification to be the friend of the employer. Owner-managers of the better type are tempted to a reflex resentment by the vigorous denunciations they suffer from the class-war enthusiasts. They, like other men, are less tempted by acquisitiveness than their fathers were, and they object to being called exploiters. They object, also, to the assertion that they have no claim to their position except money.

They think they show courage, enterprise, foresight, adaptability, inventiveness and responsible leadership. They feel that they give the community service of peculiar value, and they find that, now, a large part of the community has very different feelings about them. There is a widespread impression that the world would get on rather better if they were all shot to-morrow and their jobs taken over by committees of workers who would take their orders from mass meetings. They believe this to be untrue, and they are not entirely actuated by selfishness when they try to postpone the day when the experiment will be tried. Their opposition is not often intelligent or far-sighted, because they are modern men. Modern men are usually modest in their estimate of their own importance, but they are inordinate and exclusive in the claims they make for the art or science they serve. The owner-manager's opposition to 'workers' representation may be based on arguments which are technically valid if only the narrowest view of immediate production is taken, but they are no more valid on a wider view than are the arguments of an air expert against the dive-bomber.

However sound or unsound the owner-manager's views may be, he finds his motives denounced and his personal services rejected—at least in theory. He is afraid for the future of his kind, and he knows that in Germany his kind are regarded as useful and necessary members of the community. He may be, and usually is, a man of patriotic instincts with an honest hatred of foreign domination and of savage standards of conduct, but the threat of frustration hangs over him, and he believes that in the thing he best understands, the enemy is strong and we are weak and mistaken.

The different groups who are attracted by different aspects of totalitarianism are not groups of traitors. There are very likely potential traitors among them. How many we cannot tell, for the spawning season does not begin till the day of foreign occupation. The notion that there is a large army of persons in 'high places' only waiting to turn their coats is a piece of characteristic class malice.<sup>1</sup> It is not likely that there are many

<sup>1</sup> Hitler could invent nothing more likely to damage our war effort. But the *Daily Worker*, urging the proletariat to work steadily and hard, in spite of grievances, said they must not be provoked into striking by the obstruction of employers, some of whom might be glad to help Hitler by reducing output. Nothing could be better calculated to produce strikes than that statement. The *Daily Worker* sabotages itself.



authentic quislings in any class; it is even less likely that those there are would be found in one class only.

But the number of collaborationists would be larger. The collaborationist is the man with a touch of the quisling. He did not wish for his country's defeat. He may have worked hard enough to avert it. But, when the thing is done, he makes the best of it. He can see no gain in a despairingly obdurate defiance. Let him seek what good is to be found in the overwhelming evil. The new, conquering movement has shown huge and confident energy, and more than that. It has shown that deadly intuition that comes from a profound and complete understanding of the opponent's weakness. There is nothing so destructive of self-confidence as the discovery that the enemy knows your nature better than you do yourself. You may not like the man who knows you, but you listen to him.

Men who are not informed by an active and confident view of life must be tempted to see satisfaction in their own particular business and private affairs when public affairs go shockingly wrong. Shutting their eyes to the general condition of national subjection, they find nothing dishonourable in working for the material good of their countrymen in non-political ways, as doctors, engineers, chemists or architects, and in their own work they may find that the changes introduced by the Nazis are beneficial. The obstacles of the outworn and the traditional are swept away, and each man, burying himself in his work to avoid the ugly sight of totalitarian philosophy triumphant, is making his small, detailed contribution towards the permanence of that triumph. Teachers can hardly do this, for open acceptance of the general philosophy is demanded of them; but 'technicians' can all do it, and so can those engaged in work of social reform and reconstruction. Unless the men are infused with a strong religious faith or a lively patriotism, they will find the temptation very hard to resist, because it will be hard to recognize. Between the quisling and the conscious collaborationist and between him and the unconscious collaborationist there are moral altitudes, but there is also a clear connection.

Having escaped invasion, the people of Britain have escaped the final test, but ideas are not entirely defeated by the Channel. There is growing support for the theory that the new economic order which the Germans seek to impose will come because it must. That necessary economic change is conceived to be more



fundamental than the superficial issues of the present struggle. If this view is accepted with all seriousness, then the cruelty, the faithlessness, the bloodshed of the German war begin to appear as incidents of merely temporary importance, and the German revolution takes solid and reassuring size and shape, like a man emerging from a mist. All the arguments which have been advanced to win favour for the Russian revolution can be advanced, and are being advanced, to favour the German. The incurable progressive distinguishes between the Nazi and the German. The more impartial illuminati now distinguish between the German war and the German revolution. They favour the second, which must weaken their hatred of the first.

It may be a very philosophical view. It is possible that historians a century from now may accept it, as the historians of to-day accept a parallel view of the French Revolution. But it cannot be called a stirring trumpet-call to battle. What are we fighting for? To release the valid and fruitful German idea from its local trammellings, to destroy the savage superficials of the German war so that the reality may prevail. That is the new theory. The corpses and the debauched youth are merely examples of history's wasteful process. Men who advance this view will not light many fires. They are ideological collaborationists. Their tolerance is too large, their understanding too deep for the short-term tactics of the battlefield. They would deny, with sincerity and truth, that they are influenced by the blatancy of military success or by anything except the pure light of reason. They are as zealous and no doubt as courageous as any man could be. Tanks do not frighten them; money could not buy them. They are safe from outside pressure, cajolery and threats. Most people are. Quislings are few, and mercenaries not many. More numerous are the collaborationists in greater or less degree 'We are betrayed by what is false within.'

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### FAITH

**T**HE lack of a confident and vigorous faith in Western Europe was evident long before the war turned that insufficiency to disaster. The government of life seemed to have got out of control. The economic framework of society

suffered enormous changes, and family life, personal morality, social customs and religious conviction had changed no less; but the changes brought no access of vigour. They seemed to have happened to us, not to have been brought about by our own will and actions. That impression reflected a mood of helplessness and dissatisfaction. The growing consciousness of economic uncertainty among the poor was matched by uncertainty among the well-to-do concerning the whole purpose of life. It was possible to discuss quite seriously the cause and cure of civilization, to admire and imitate barbaric culture, and to combine the development of the most advanced mechanical technique with atavistic personal conduct.

Shallowness of belief was a startling feature of contemporary life. A man could change his fundamental opinions from year to year, without making any change in his friends or his habits or his conduct. It was the age of sympathizers rather than of zealots. People were frivolously ready to make emphatic judgments, but not to implement them. Thus for every member of the Communist Party there were scores of more or less official friends of the Soviet Union. Sympathy with the Soviet was an exercise of intellectual and social liberty, but membership of the party was a limitation of liberty. Weak broad-mindedness spread far beyond the political world. Nudists were few; sun-bathers were innumerable. Criticism of class-education in public schools was very common among the well-to-do, but those who expressed a practical faith by sending their children to proletarian schools were few indeed; and even the modern Left-Wing boarding schools showed a remarkable unwillingness to find places for poor boys. Parents who showed a bold indifference to their children's views on this world and the next were very careful to see that they acquired the full snob-value in accent and that their health was nourished with nervous care. One progressive school advertised that the children were given a selection of all the major religions to pick and choose from, but that their diet was arranged on the latest and most scientific principles, and there was no tuck shop. Their god was their belly and their glory was their shame.

The anti-intellectualism of D. H. Lawrence was much appreciated by intellectuals. He attacked most particularly the intellectual life of his day, but he was welcomed by the intellectuals as one of themselves because he was antinomian. His

own imitateness and inferiority sense helped the illusion. His obsession with sexual questions was pleasing to an age that took sex nervously. In the days between wars, summer schools, holiday camps and similar institutions occupied much of the ample leisure of the clerkly class. The three most popular subjects at these meetings were Peace, the New Education, and Sex. But it was Sex that sold the tickets. No clearer indication of waning sexual vitality was needed. There was a waning of almost all urges, except the urge for secondary satisfactions and for general unrestraint.

It was the absence of final seriousness that gave the general chaos of opinion its damping effect of monotony. However widely their views differed, men were alike in regarding the right to hold any view as more important than the quality of the views they did hold. They were unshaped, undirected and uninspired by their own beliefs. Yet they regarded the Victorian age as one of dull uniformity, as a time when men were much of a muchness, well-intentioned, perhaps, but stuffy and conventional, accepting a timid and pharisaical morality, enjoying a tepid and shallow culture, and leading earnestly dull and narrow lives with a good deal of self-satisfaction. That was the vague, popular memory.

The reality was much more interesting and instructive. It is true that the Victorians were earnest and self-confident. They did have a wide range of common and firmly held opinions. But the basis of common belief was the battlefield on which they fought out their sharp differences. Dr. Arnold made great changes in Rugby, but he made no change in the general view of the right relationship between parent and child, nor in the general view of the moral purpose of education. It is characteristic that Gladstone's attitude towards the monarchy seemed excessively zealous to everybody, except the monarch. Gladstone and Bradlaugh were at deep variance on the truth of Christian revelation, but not on the validity of Christian morality. Macaulay could only express his essential, lucid rationalism in terms of emphatic Protestantism. It is not accidental that we think of so many of the great Victorians in pairs; Cobden and Bright; Disraeli and Gladstone; Dickens and Thackeray; Manning and Newman; Tennyson and Browning; even Gilbert and Sullivan. They are pairs because they were workers on common ground; but, with the exception of Cobden and Bright,



they were sharply contrasting pairs. Disraeli and Gladstone were strong supporters of the same church, but each thought the other a hypocrite. Manning and Newman were converts to the same church, but there was a gulf between them that went down to the roots of temperament. There was a parallel difference between Dickens, Browning and Gilbert, and Thackeray, Tennyson and Sullivan. We lump them together, but they divided their admirers by one of those instinctive judgements, like preference for cats over dogs, which can neither be explained nor reconciled.

The clash of personality sometimes surprises us. It was natural that Shaftesbury should distrust Peel and call him one of the unbaptized; but there must have been some subtle cause for his equal dislike of Gladstone. In a man like Shaftesbury there was a mixture of liberal and illiberal elements, which shows the uncomfortable strength of rigid principles. The Shaftesbury of the Factory Acts was a man after Dickens's own heart; but the Shaftesbury of Sunday Observance was the type that Dickens had scarified in *Sunday Under Three Heads*. Yet it was the same Shaftesbury, actuated by the same principle, his deep devotion to the commands of God. The same high consistency which urged Shaftesbury to unpopular social activities led Gladstone to disestablish the Irish Church and move for Irish Home Rule. Sentiment was in favour of the Irish Church. Sentiment, deep instinct, tradition and imagined interest were in favour of the Union. But a sense of consistent justice slowly and painfully prevailed. A. J. Balfour was said to have been converted to the necessity for a Jewish National Home in one night, but he remained blandly obdurate to the Irish claim for a long lifetime. Balfour was a modern man.

Such courageous consistency and vigour is now hard to find, for it is not possible to remain inflexibly true to contradictory principles. Men who accepted both the supreme good of political liberty (based on private property) and the supreme good of economic equality (based on the abolition of private property) could not afford to think seriously. They could, perhaps, feel passionately, but even their passions were not very impressive. Clemenceau said that some virtue had gone out of the English. His judgement was not the less true because he failed to add that it had also gone out of the French. The virtue was respect for life, its possibilities and its purpose, and the failure of respect was clearly indicated in the falling birth-rate. Enquiries as to



the specific reasons for the declining birth-rate give interesting and useful results, but they rather beg the question. The root reason may not be specific at all, but a general lassitude, rationalized into any one of a number of concrete and particular objections. In 1937 the National Council for Equal Citizenship debated a resolution approving family allowances and asking for a campaign to check the decline in population. One woman put herself strongly against the resolution. She said that more babies was just what Mussolini wanted. To prevent war, she said, women should stop the supply of cannon fodder. *Solitudinem faciunt et pacem appellant*. She was not worried about the long-term effects of her policy. 'Why worry about what is going to happen in 1955?' she asked. 'For God's sake let us worry about what is happening right now.' It is not to be thought that her peculiar form of unilateral disarmament was the result of much cogent deliberation and weighing of the pros and cons. It was instinctive rejection of life.

The argument of social advancement and material comfort as the main cause of declining birth-rate is not much more convincing. It is quite true that the temptations of snobbery and self-indulgence are very effective among those timidly acquisitive and security-loving classes which form an increasing part of the population. But the Victorian age which was an age of large families was also an age when men pursued money with active and unctuous zeal and climbed the social ladder with a degree of concentration not known in our time. It would have paid the Victorian father as handsomely as the modern father to restrict his family to one or two, but the argument did not appeal to him. Samuel Butler said that money was an extension of personality. His bourgeois contemporaries agreed with him, but they felt that a family was a more emphatic extension. Their children represented an extended grip on life. The father might be quite notably a selfish man; but selfishness then bred families; it now breeds endowment insurances.

To advance economic uncertainty as a reason for a falling birth-rate is to betray the state of mind which made the birth-rate fall. Only those who put economic certainty as a pre-requisite of tolerable living will accept uncertainty as a good excuse for self-imposed sterility. The future is not for those who are afraid of it, and doubt of the future and fear of the present are marks of a civilization without a firm and general faith.

It is a satisfactory irony that the age when men decided, in practice, that only this life is worth bothering about should also be the age when men began to wonder if this life was worth living. Decay in solid religious faith marched with decay in humanitarian faith. Each left a confused residue of sentiment. Self-styled Christians who believe that zeal for material improvement is the 'real' Christianity are the brothers of those who believe that totalitarian plenty is the 'real' democracy. Religion which had compromised its validity for the next world had lost its value for this.

The loss was widely felt, even by those who had openly and totally abandoned all pretence of faith. Measures had to be taken to counteract the loss of reverence and the sense of mystery which was making Dead Sea fruit of all social improvements. A number of writers set out to remedy the barrenness of the contemporary spirit by putting religion on a basis of belief more agreeable to themselves. Mr. Wells and Mr. Julian Huxley, among others, took time off from their deeper interests to give us a new interpretation of the meaning and purpose of life. But, even to the most uncritical eye, the new religions which appeared in book form or in the middle pages of Sunday newspapers must have appeared to lack the sweep and inspiration which were needed to transform the Waste Land. Some of the authors based their findings almost entirely on biological theories, and others on mathematical; but all were painfully and characteristically particularist. The biologists could find little or no room for God. Religion, for them, was an intelligent cultivation of certain instincts of reverence which enriched life; it was a branch of æsthetic appreciation. The compulsion of moral standards was not even considered. Whether there was or was not a God, Man was responsible only to himself. A man would follow his own logical processes, with such assistance as he cared to accept from others, and he would follow his own moral impulses, without considering deeply where they came from and to what tradition he owed them, and would be satisfied that he had lived well if his works looked good to himself. 'Let us be very certain that the only right belief for every man is that which his own consciousness tells him is true, although our consciousness tells us something different.' This statement of Havelock Ellis is either a platitude or an invitation to anarchy. It is self-regarding; it ignores the demands of objective truth; it implies that what we

believe has no serious effect on our communal life. Havelock Ellis's consciousness told him to do the work he did do, which included the advertising of the most nauseous of all forms of voluntary sterility. But there were other persons whose consciousness told them that the works of Havelock Ellis must be denied publication. It is difficult to see how Havelock Ellis could deny their right to strive for the suppression of his views except by denying the objective value of what their consciousness told them was true. Men may comfortably follow their own consciousness when it tells them merely what to think, but what they think is very apt to tell them what they must do, and the untrammelled rule of the consciousness ends in anarchy of action, if men begin to translate their thoughts into deeds.

Whatever the intellectual value of such interpretations of religion may have been, they were manifestly of no value at all to the community; for a nation which still preserved much of the Christian atmosphere could not separate religion from humility, duty and service, least of all from God, and take any interest in what remained. A religion reserved for Sunday was still a mark of hypocrisy; a religion which governed no day at all was without serious meaning. The football crowds which sang 'Abide with me' meant, for the moment, exactly what they said. They considered religion as a personal relationship with God, and they could not conceive it otherwise.

As a result of this lingering prejudice of orthodoxy the new religions, designed for the new age, were as successful as those proletarian magazines of current literature which appealed straight to the masses and sold a hundred copies.

Havelock Ellis would no doubt have sympathized with the spirit of Professor Whitehead's axiom that religion is what a man does with his solitariness. This large definition, which sanctifies a good deal of quiet drinking, is not at all helpful to ourselves, for the British peoples still believe that religion is what a man does with his life. That conviction has very obvious and present dangers, but at least it deafens the public ear to Professor Whitehead.

It also limits the appeal of Mr. Bertrand Russell, whose *Free Man's Worship* created a considerable stir when it appeared. What Mr. Russell does with his solitariness is very lonely indeed. 'That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes



and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins . . . all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.'

Thus Mr. Russell on the wearisome condition of humanity. But he has consolation, of a kind, to offer. 'Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned to lose to-day his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.'

The emotional atmosphere of this declaration and its weight of emphasis are, of course, not philosophical at all. The word 'condemnation' gives the whole thing away. It imitates, no doubt unconsciously, the bleak, yet emotional atmosphere to be found in Pascal, though, of course, the nature of the underlying belief is far different. But it was the emotion, not the belief, that took the trick.

*A Free Man's Worship* had a considerable vogue among University students and the like. There is nothing that the young like so much, in the intervals of dancing and learning the saxophone, as an attitude of high, heroic gloom. Young Prince Rasselas had 'a look that discovered him to feel some com-



placency in his own perspicuity, and to receive some solace of the miseries of life, from consciousness of the delicacy with which he felt and the eloquence with which he bewailed them.' The young prince was a typical student.

Mr. Russell's defiance of thermodynamic Fate touched a generation which had begun to suspect a certain sediment of sugar in A. E. Housman's Roman despair. The Romantic attitude was very pleasing, and many a self-approving youth gazed for as long as two minutes at the bright indifference of the stars and defied the brutality of chance to kill the gallant, hopeless flame within him. But that mood passes with early youth, and the declaration had no lasting value except for the few who were equipped to follow Mr. Russell's stony path of reasoning, and, of these, the much smaller number, who found it necessary to reach his blank conclusion. As a guide to the conduct of life it was considerably worse than useless.

This Mr. Russell showed himself, when he was called upon to give some moral advice to the American public, troubled by the horrors of the present war. His advice was unexceptionable, but it differed in no way from what might have been said by Mr. Godfrey Winn, and it found no backing in his fundamental philosophy. 'Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way.' To say that is to say that Nature is the invincible Nazi, that the movement we are fighting, taken at its worst, is in tune with the reality of things. Against it, all Mr. Russell has to rely on for inspiration is what he has chosen to retain of an inherited tradition which was assuredly not built on the basis of an unyielding and melodramatic despair.

The practical importance of Mr. Russell's attitude may not call for much space in examination, but it has at least the interest of being final. You can hardly do anything more extreme with the religious spirit than harness it to pure materialism. But the Russell doctrine is of no more and no less general significance than the Wells, the Huxley or any other contemporary doctrine. However far solid, doctrinal Christianity has decayed in Britain, it has at least queered the pitch for all substitute religions, for all foreseeable time. All other religions are coterie cults. It is Christianity or nothing for us.

For very many it is nothing; but, worse than that, for very many more, it is a Christianity false in spirit. Mr. Priestley has

claimed that we are: 'In the broadest sense of the term, a religious people,' and, for that reason, there has not been here, as elsewhere, a sharp decline in the importance of human life. 'The central human dignity of the individual is still recognized.' He goes on to quote Professor John Macmurray as saying that the British working-classes 'tend to judge religiously, that is to say, in terms of direct relation between man and man.'

But, with respect to Mr. Priestley, Professor Macmurray and the Anglican bishops who think like them, to judge religiously is not to judge in terms of direct relationship between man and man, but in terms of direct relationship between man and God. Mr. Priestley says that the central authority of the State is robbed of much of its magic for people who believe that 'the individual exists in his own right. . . . It (the central authority) has not, in fact, taken God's place.' But if you believe that a man exists in his own right, you, yourself, are putting him in God's place. It is the root of Christianity that man exists, primarily, not for this world at all. Religion may serve earthly purposes, and has served earthly purposes, better than any secular inspiration can do; but the earthly purpose remains secondary. Religion can serve human needs, but it cannot be bent to human needs without being broken.

The whole fallacy of the 'challenge to the Churches' lies in that error. Christians are disciples of Christ, but to judge from many clerical utterances, they would seem to be followers of the Cheeryble brothers. In so far as Christian leaders have neglected to raise their voices against manifest injustice, they have failed in one part of their duty. In so far as they equate Christianity with social amelioration, or any other earthly good whatever, they are failing in the whole of their duty. That is the serious present danger to Christianity in Britain; it is merely another instance of inordinacy.

Santayana in a happy simile has compared the typical British church with the typical Continental church, with reference to the attitude of the man who is no longer a practising and believing Christian. The Continental church stands in the public square, almost flush with the street. When you walk out of the door you are at once in the bright sunlight and the market-place, and among the business of the world. But the typical English church stands among yew trees and gravestones and is shut off from the public road. When you walk out of the church, you linger in the

churchyard, still half-tasting the religious atmosphere. Santayana argued that the material difference was symbolic of a mental difference. When a Continental forsook his faith, he plunged straight into the world and shut himself off from religious influence as abruptly, as emphatically as if he had shut a door behind him; but the Briton who forsook his faith still lingered in the spiritual precincts.

It is this residue of sentiment which has made rigorous and combative secularism a comparatively minor force in British life; but profoundly illogical positions are not permanently advantageous. The impact of secularism was weakened in the debatable land of secondary religious sentiment; but the impact of religion is being weakened in the same way now. The clear antithesis between those who believe that the whole duty of man is contained in an arbitrary (and variable) selection of Christian virtues and those who believe that it lies in serving the purpose of God has been obscured and is being further obscured. There are religious leaders who appear to believe, or, at least, who lend colour to the belief, that if we seek first everything else, the Kingdom of God (if any) will be added unto us. That, of course, is not the stated doctrinal position, but it is their emotional atmosphere. Clerics who are loud in their praises of Communism and regard its militant atheism as an unfortunate blemish on a great movement are poor servants of their cause.<sup>1</sup>

The great Albert Hall meeting in September of 1942 was by no means a bad example of a bad tendency. Indeed, if all the speeches had been phrased with the same care as Archbishop Temple's, the occasion would have been beneficial; for the application of Christian thought to social problems is a prime necessity. The careful proportions of the Archbishop's statement did something to undo the harm that had been done by earlier and less fundamental statements from the same source. But the audience who heard the Archbishop also heard some strikingly wild claims made by other speakers. To say that privilege must be abolished because the economic situation or the spirit of the age demands it may be arguable. To say that privilege must be abolished because the Gospels demand it is not arguable at all; it is balderdash.

<sup>1</sup> The Dean of Canterbury said that the day he became a director of the *Daily Worker* was the proudest day of his life. This was surely ungracious to God whose declared servant he became much earlier, not to mention to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who appointed him to his deanery.



Such thoughtless propaganda does more than anything else to lower the authority of Christian teaching, even in the social field. The *Daily Worker* gave a very proper reply to the propagandist claims of the Albert Hall speakers. 'It must not be forgotten,' said the *Daily Worker*, 'that indefinite "Christian" social aspirations are part of the most dangerous stock-in-trade of Fascist demagogues.' That is true. The attempt to harness Christianity to one social doctrine will be matched by an attempt to harness it to another. We are attempting to square Christianity with social theories instead of attempting to square social theories with Christianity. That is the meaning of the 'challenge to the Churches.' So long as the churches are willing to be the challenged and not the challengers, they will gain nothing but a half-contemptuous, half-indifferent patronage.

The *Daily Worker* complained that the archbishops had still very far to go before they could hope to be socially useful. They had not yet accepted the obvious axiom that private property must be abolished, nor did they admit that the regeneration they desired was dependent 'on the fate of Stalingrad and the opening of the Second Front.' That is the authentic voice of the candid non-Christian critic. 'Keeness for social betterment and readiness to face radical change, though excellent and welcome, are not enough. To be fruitful they must go together with a realistic understanding of the class structure of society, a readiness to expose the wolves in pseudo-religious clothing, and a practical alliance with the working-class movement.' That is the programme of proletarian erastianism in a nutshell. Men who retain any shreds of doctrinal Christianity will hesitate to go so far, or, at least, to admit that they have gone so far. But nothing else will do them any good whatever. You cannot serve both God and the most benevolent Mammon.

The progress of social amelioration in Britain has, of course, been much influenced by evangelical religion. Until the rise of doctrinal materialism and the theory of the class-war there was, as a rule, no barrier between a particular social measure and the Christian conscience, though there was often enough a strain and a distortion. The Socialists who say that the Gospels demand the abolition of private property are as justified in their claim as the Temperance advocates who said, and still say, that the Gospels demand prohibition of alcohol. But a wrong general emphasis is more dangerous than an occasional distortion. To pursue a



line of social duty with immense vigour is admirable (and to neglect it is disgraceful); but to accept social duty as a substitute for Christian belief and personal practice is wholly wrong.

The tendency to do that has apparently spread enormously in the United States, and it had spread far enough here to create a sentimental atmosphere that filled all the churchyard and leaked into the church. In that atmosphere it was possible to seek Christian guidance from atheist countries and to put the class-war beside the Beatitudes. Liberal humanitarianism had developed so many internal contradictions that another one may have made no great difference to the sentimentalist; but the failure of men who by their profession are bound to uphold the supremacy of doctrine is very disquieting. For doctrine is the last citadel of the remaining social virtues.

It is often said that doctrine limits the activities of the mind, but not so much attention is paid to its more striking effect in limiting the damage and the mental confusion caused by strong emotion. Sir John Bowring gave years of honourable service, as secretary, to the Peace Society; but there came a time when he conceived the best interests of Peace to be served by a wholesale destruction of Chinese property and slaughter of Chinese subjects on a pretext as false as it was flimsy. It was in the same spirit that a woman of strongly pacifist views proposed an invasion of Germany immediately Hitler came to power, saying that such action would not be war, but police work.

It is possible for men to urge freer divorce in the name of the purity and sanctity of the home, to support social compulsions as charters of freedom, to show their love of children by encouraging birth prevention and to spread what they call a religious spirit by philosophical materialism. The dominant social opinion of Britain has changed with unconscious ease from liberty based on property to liberty based on the abolition of property; from equality that is proudly indifferent to material standards to equality that thinks of nothing else; from fraternity that proclaimed the brotherhood of man to fraternity that insists on the unrelenting malice of the class war.

No man who accepts the rule of doctrine can rival the inconsistencies of the man whose conduct is based on sentiment and on carefully unexamined principles. Perversity and self-deception may sanction large illogicalities, but now and again they come against the rock of clearly stated belief. This does not

happen often enough to please the humanitarian people who themselves reject doctrine entirely; but they must admit that it does happen: that it is not possible for a Christian to accept race theory without a flagrant contradiction of his faith, as it has proved possible for humanitarians to accept murder in the name of liquidation, and for democrats to accept dictatorship in the name of revolution. The letter of the law has this advantage, that it always reads the same; and in the language of dogma, words have one and only one meaning.

That is why so much is made of the failure of Christians to live up to their standards. Their standards are discoverable, and they are permanent. The standards of progress are progressive. The permanence and the clarity of Christian social teaching have a great social value, and so have the due proportion and subordination of that teaching. Nothing but an acceptance of the supreme importance of life in the other world will persuade any large number of our people to shake themselves free of a self-defeating obsession with material comfort in this.

That is not an obsession felt only, or even very strikingly, by the under-nourished, with whom it would be understandable. It is felt very generally and very rancorously by people whose material state would have roused envy here a century ago, and would arouse envy in almost any other country, now. They may feel a brotherhood of oppression with the labourers of Shanghai, but if ever their dreams of international collaboration come true and they are in contact with the destitute people of the East, there will be hard words going.

The sense of personal responsibility and duty has been weakened almost everywhere, and abandoned by many. The sense of family duty and responsibility is no stronger. The inviolability of human life has been attacked with success at the gates of birth and death. Sexual morality has been drastically corrupted, and the subtle temptation of social envy has been elevated to a social duty. It can hardly be said that these great and rapid changes have made life deeper and more full; and yet change continues.

In so far as there is any general morality at all, it is a morality of kindness. But it is not easy to be kind to everybody. The right to divorce a lunatic partner may be a comfort to those whose partners show signs of insanity, but not to the mentally afflicted whose partners show signs of being comforted. There is little

kindness for unpopular groups whose sufferings are not under the eye. Their sufferings are said to be exaggerated, historically inevitable, or self-inflicted.

It is taken for granted that the atmosphere of kindness will strengthen from age to age if humanitarianism continues to rule the mind. But the people who are honestly convinced that kindness is the bedrock of their faith are the descendants of those whose bedrock was individual duty and responsibility. The gulf between refined and excessive tenderness for physical suffering and a refined and sadistic taste for inflicting physical suffering is very narrow. It has been bridged in Germany, in practice, and here it is being bridged in the imagination by the millions who enjoy the sadistic fiction which the principle of free expression permits to pollute the bookstalls.

The Christian conscience which cannot go so far and so fast as the humanitarian conscience in its advance must be ready to stem a possible headlong retreat. But the infusion of the Christian conscience with sentimentality will weaken doctrine, and the placing of secondary objects first will reduce its importance. The eloquent Disraeli greatly deplored divisions within the Church of England, but he foresaw the day (happy man) when unity would be restored, making the influence of the church only greater and more beneficial. 'But then arises the question. Suppose churchmen were again united and organized, as I hope they may be, on what course shall they agree with regard to church-rates?'

There was bathos in the question, but not much more than in the contemporary question about bishops' salaries and endowments. The root of the matter lies elsewhere. It is necessary for all men calling themselves Christian to examine themselves, to discover what Christian doctrines they really believe, if only to learn respect for convictions they do not share. It is again necessary for them to put the maintenance of these convictions before all conflicting material and social advantages, however attractive they may appear.

It is necessary for all men to consider strictly and closely what remains of our common tradition of the good life, what values of personality and of social purpose we must prefer even to arterial highways and universal electric light. If we continue to live on sentiments and on sentiments derived from sentiments; if we continue to follow the policy of drift so often denounced in foreign affairs, our inner strength, such as it is, will not indefinitely



survive. Our halting political government will not be cured by popular discontent, because it is a symptom of a halting philosophy, and the more principles become confused, the more fumbling and uncertain government will become. 'No man can govern in the name of doubt.'

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### HOPE

---

Led by the gleam  
Of her own dying smile, instead of eyes.

**T**HE British public, as it is represented by our most prolific writers and most frequent speakers, is fairly well satisfied that the elements of moral unity and common purpose are easily found, and that we can very quickly light a burning and noble fire if only stupidity, selfishness and superstition will stand out of the way.

We are told that the energies roused and marshalled for the prosecution of war must be devoted to the purposes of reconstruction. To do this, it will be necessary to retain many of the Government's war-time powers, to override vested interests and to reduce the profit motive to negligible proportions. In public statements it is nearly always the vested interests of ownership, profit and control which are mentioned and condemned; but an enthusiastic planner must privately admit that the vested interests represented by the T.U.C. will also demand some handling, perhaps more respectful and more tender, but none the less firm. That is why the planning movement keeps itself free of close entanglement with the Labour Party.

The minds behind the planning movement have not been seriously affected by the war. They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing of fundamental importance. Often enough they will admit to specific error. They were too enthusiastic about disarmament and too willing to believe well of Germany. But these are admissions of errors in observation of fact, not confessions of error in their view of life and life's possibilities. The man who will admit that it might have been as well to have had some aeroplanes ready for Munich will still insist that the cause of painless peace had been cast away wantonly at the time of



the invasion of Manchuria, when a peremptory word would have stopped Japan, whose mettle would have been cowed by the thought of the grim bastions of Hong Kong and Singapore and the sinister shapes of the American ships lying in readiness at Pearl Harbour. The profound illusion has survived. There was never a time when a few firm words were of any particular value. There never was a time when words without the will to act had any meaning, and when the possibility of action did not demand the closest and most minute scrutiny of ends and means.

We have learned that war is neither easy nor simple nor readily predictable in its course; but these are not the lessons of war which the progressive and incurably hopeful mind is willing to apply to peace. But, in fact, the problems of war are simple compared with the problems of peace, and the means to the end are much more easily organized because the end is single, dominating and obviously desirable.

The great problems of life are never easy and seldom simple. It is a cruel folly to pretend that, if the whole nation will accept State planning, material prosperity will be won without much difficulty. The massive strength of German war power has been held up with monotonous frequency as a model of what a planned economy can do to secure an abundant production. Yet it would be wiser to study German production to see what a planned economy cannot do. Extraordinary results may be produced by extraordinary sacrifices. Gruelling work, pinched rations, the employment of extreme inventiveness in makeshift devices, the exercise of tyrannical authority and the scrapping of a nearly endless range of civilian consumable goods have been necessary to keep the German forces in the field. The sacrifice of leisure, liberty and material comfort may well be thought worth while in war-time, for the sake of victory. But a planned economy on the German model in peace-time is less plausible. It is a sacrifice of leisure, liberty and material comfort, for the sake of—leisure, liberty and material comfort.

The German planned economy, operated with the most ruthless vigour, is still not sufficient for the job in hand. The Germans have had to make enormous use of helot, and therefore unsatisfactory labour, and of the installations and resources of the conquered countries. To suggest that German production has been expanded almost illimitably by the magic of planning is to ignore the most instructive and the most obvious fact in the

German war effort; which is that expanded production in some lines has been very largely procured by contracted production in others. There is not much magic in that, but there is sacrifice and hard work. The need to use foreign labour and productive machinery is evidence of another fact which is equally obvious: there comes a time when the utmost ingenuity and pressure will squeeze no more from the orange. In fact, less is squeezed year by year. Planning becomes helpless when men and machines are worn out.

These are truisms which it should be quite unnecessary to repeat, but the people who promised painless peace are now promising painless prosperity. Some good blue prints and statistical abstracts are expected to do the wonderful work that was formerly expected of a few plain words to Japan.

Russia's peace-time planning was based on no such cheerful fallacy. (It should be noted by progressive internationalists that, in Russia's judgement, the creation of a planned economy demanded economic and social isolation from the rest of the world.) Russia's planning was a grim business, though the ground was cleared flat for it: which was a great advantage. We are constantly told that production in a capitalist country is crippled by the absence of central organization, by the evil workings of the profit-motive, and by unwillingness to make 'the fullest use of the latest discoveries of Science'; these obstacles being, of course, interrelated. Whatever we may suffer from these handicaps in peace-time (or, as is often alleged, with large irresponsibility, in war-time), Russia did not suffer at all. There we saw a planned economy directed by a central authority of absolute power which was entirely independent of the profit-motive and was head over heels in love with modern science. If we believed the rosy promises of enthusiastic planners, we would expect to read that every Russian enjoyed a limitless quantity of manufactured goods, manufactured with little or no human effort. Yet nobody denies that the successive Russian plans caused immense privations and were marred by colossal blunders that would have done credit to the most private of industries; and that happened in spite of the fact that the men engaged in operating the plans had a vested interest in nothing, not even their own lives.

Our own experience of planning should have taught us to be more modest in laughing at Russian mistakes; but we are at

liberty to derive instruction from Russian methods of dealing with mistakes. The danger of an accusation of sabotage may be a more potent stimulus to efficiency than the profit-motive, but it is scarcely more moral. Wholesale liquidation of errors is not a policy which a democracy can accept without pangs. Nor can a business community readily accept a claim that a production plan had been 'over-fulfilled' in an essential part by employing many more men than had been budgeted for. A profit-making society would write that down as a loss. A planned society can call it a triumph; but it remains a failure.

It may be argued that the errors of the Five Year Plans were only to be expected in a country with primitive and scanty industrial equipment. But the point is, they were not expected. Firing squads and famines expressed authority's surprise. A plan which is not based on a most minute and accurate estimate of the proportion of means to ends is a defective plan. It is useful to remember that plans may be defective.

Some planning errors betray themselves immediately, or very soon. The British civilian evacuation scheme was a painful failure which betrayed itself as soon as the first return trains steamed back to the cities. 'The Five Year Plan in Four Years' was an error which betrayed itself when the slogan was changed to four years and a fraction. Other errors do not betray themselves till they have betrayed their authors. The French military organization is a sad case in point.

The management of a comprehensive plan demands much more than a sound grasp of applied mathematics and industrial methods. It demands a rigorous will, an eminent degree of foresight, a clear and solid purpose and high qualities of insight and imagination. A well-trained man can calculate how many workers are needed for the full efficiency of a certain factory, but it takes other qualities to decide priority between one factory and another of a very different kind, to settle the priority of conflicting needs and adjust limited means to great and expanding ends. It is easy to say lightly that the first stage of your plan will concentrate on the production of capital goods to the sacrifice of consumer goods; but moral and political problems arise when the sacrifice of consumable goods entails the sacrifice of consumers.

Who decides between the creation of new means of production and the manufacture of goods for use? Who decides between one



class of goods and another? Moscow suffered very badly from overcrowding and very badly, also, from deficient transport. On what grounds was it decided to spend lavish wealth on the Underground? The decision may have been wise, but it is quite certain that the engineers who were itching to build a subway did not view the problem with any more impartiality than the men who were itching to build more houses, and that the final decision was not made by either. We may also be sure that the decision that was taken and the decision that might have been taken would each have been received with a yell of indignation from some part of the community, if the community had been free to yell.

What part of the national resources will be spent on purposes of peace, and what part on preparation for war? How much will be spent on the army, how much on the navy, how much on the air force? How much on guns as against tanks, how much on active defence, and how much dissipated by dispersal?

We are quite familiar with the anxious urgency of these problems in war-time, and we know that they cannot be left entirely to technical experts, each fighting for his own hand; for the demon of selfish, senseless and wasteful competition is very apt to creep back into the swept and garnished hearts of these gentlemen, and it is not merely impersonal professional acquisitiveness that returns. In Russia, hard necessity has cleared the way for piece-work, differential rates, competitive production, bonuses, privileged classes, inheritance and other low devices of capitalism. The reason is simple. Humanity is the primary raw material of planning, and when a plan fails to change the nature of the raw material, the raw material will change the nature of the plan. Planners cannot afford to be ideologues; they are what is called 'practical men.' Their first and increasingly absorbing aim is to make the plan work. If handicaps may be turned into advantages by scrapping the ideological purpose of the plan, then the purpose will be scrapped, with less regret than accompanies the scrapping of defective machinery. Ambition, cupidity and privilege were recognized in Russia because they could not be planned out of existence. They were vested in new phrases and given a formally temporary licence, but these manœuvres were only a polite disguise for an ideological defeat.

If the red slayer thinks he slays,  
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I meet and pass and turn again.



When enthusiasm yields first place to anxiety, the machinery of planning is adapted to low-grade humanity, just as furnaces are adapted to low-quality fuel. A plan which is launched to create general equality may easily create the exact opposite, without conscious or deliberate treachery; because the necessity of making the plan work, somehow, anyhow, becomes as acute and dominating as the necessity of winning a war.

We are told that the Russian plan has worked wonders, and we are justified in assuming that it has done a great deal, for it would be surprising if a population of more than one hundred and eighty millions had spent many years of heroic effort and no less heroic endurance without massive results to show. But we are compelled to ask if the gains exceeded and justified the sacrifice? We may be told that Russia is Russia and the sacrifice was largely unnecessary. If so, so much the worse for planners. If the sacrifice was necessary, so much the worse for plans. The Russian standard of living was undoubtedly raised, but it was not raised suddenly, enormously or without huge efforts. An immense enterprise yielded comparatively modest results. That is not to condemn the enterprise, but to condemn rash expectations. There is no reason to expect substantially better results from any other plan.

Our own war plan has also yielded massive results, but our Government has not found the public ready to accept the results as a simple and convincing proof of success. Pre-war rearmament gave us an army in France which was well equipped for everything, except fighting. Our army in Egypt, though well-found in many respects, was found lacking, from time to time, in some small essentials, with consequences that were distressing. Our coal production is very heavy, but we could do with more, and it is not clear that planning can supply it. It is often said that our allocation of man-power, productive resources and raw materials lack precision and a sure grasp of fundamental needs. For example, a woman called away from responsible and important civilian work was employed in a war factory selling tickets for the putting green. A nursery school, started to release mothers for factory work, had eleven children and nine attendants. On the other hand, a woman who claimed priority in shopping because she was working alternate night and day shifts announced that she was the mother of fourteen children. There is a general and stubborn conviction that our planning,

despite its massive results, has been marred by a great deal of fumbling and by a free fight for priorities behind the scenes.

We are not prepared to call the plan a success because large gains have been obtained by large sacrifices. We want to be assured that there is a reasonably just proportion between the means used and the results obtained, and the results obtained and the ends aimed at.

In a profitless economy we have no standard to enable us to answer the first question. When Mr. Churchill was told that our production had reached a standard of only seventy-five per cent, he asked, very properly: 'Seventy-five per cent of what?' Elaborate statistical surveys might give us some kind of an answer (if we could understand it), but surveys are not objective; for surveys are made by planners.

To the second question, the proportion of results obtained to the ends aimed at, war does give an answer, and this present war has shaken us with many a ringing and resounding 'No.' War planning has this advantage over peace planning, that the end originally aimed at remains securely dominant. But it has this disadvantage, that some errors are ruinous and not to be concealed. With limited resources (and planning is always a matter of limited resources), what weapons must be regarded as necessary, and what weapons may be done without? In the question of the dive-bomber, the planners of the Air Ministry gave one answer, and a well-argued and technically plausible answer it was. But public opinion, the judgement of the Army and the results of battle gave another. It happened that the best or most influential technicians were wrong. Target bombing has been largely abandoned; but target bombing was the key of the Master Plan. How much of our national effort should be devoted to the production of standard types of weapons, and how much to the small-scale production of experimental types? It is reported that this problem caused a sharp fight between Lord Beaverbrook and some others, with results that Lord Beaverbrook's enemies were not slow to point out.

The importance of such decisions is less obvious in peacetime, but none the less real. Bad decisions always lead to bad results, and because the results are concealed they are less easily rectified. The profit-motive, where it works, provides a criterion as arbitrary and as final as the test of war. It was not any planning memorandum that decided Ford to scrap his Model T. It was

economic warfare. Planners may argue that the criterion of the profit-motive is anti-social and sordid. They may say that we must substitute some nobler thing which works uniformly for the public good (i.e. for the success of the plan). But they have not indicated what the nobler thing will be. The point is important.

The German plan may be the most efficient, for all we know to the contrary. But in Germany, even before the war, everything was subordinated to military needs, and the criterion was military necessity. Even that was not an objective criterion, but the fallible judgement of the High Command. The judgement of a competent High Command is apt to be cautious because it stands to be corrected by catastrophic events. So there was some reason to trust the skill of the German war-lords. But bureaucratic planners have no corresponding inhibition, nor do they enjoy much public confidence. It seems that the German public had a deep trust in their generals. It would be false to say that the British public have an equal trust in Mr. Herbert Morrison and Mr. Bevin. They do trust Lord Woolton, but they do not look forward to a lifetime of his capable services.

Our planning, such as it is, differs from the German and the Russian models in its lack of overriding central authority. It is democratic planning. Mr. Borkenau thinks that is a high advantage. Mr. Borkenau, representing a large school of thought, is a political theorist whose good-humoured, shrewd and objective writing is occasionally marred by bigotries as irritating and surprising as a bad misprint. He believes that democratic planning avoids the evils of authoritarian planning because it is compromise planning, allowing proportionate weight to conflicting interests.

But planning is not a matter of making appropriate concessions to conflicting interests. Planning is the complete subordinating of conflicting interests to an all-seeing and all-foreseeing High Command. Planning is authoritarian and cannot be anything else. An attempt at compromise planning does not, in practice, mean saying 'this much' to one interest and 'thus much' to another; it means saying 'yes' to everybody, with resultant confusion. It was once alleged in the Commons that Mr. Bevin had failed to exercise his authority over certain recalcitrant groups among the workers. He replied by making spirited reference to recalcitrant groups among the employers. The answer was possibly a timely stimulus to the debating spirit



of the Labour Party, but it left the country rather bewildered. What kind of policy was it that excused negligence in one direction by drawing attention to negligence in another? It was a policy of planning by compromise.

The Government has not always been so weak. In fact, the degree of integration that we have achieved has been reached by some exercise of the quite exceptional authority that has been vested in the Government for the duration of the war. The knowledge that the authority is there to be used has probably done more to secure obedience than its occasional use; though it has been used quite freely and firmly against weak and unorganized interests. But the knowledge that the authority is temporary and is necessary to the dominating end of winning the war, has alone reconciled ordinary people to its use.

Their resignation to governmental control is a real and deeply felt sacrifice, for the people of our generation show a quite exceptional resentment at any interference with what they call their liberty. On the other hand, they show an equally unusual passivity in accepting governmental interference with affairs that were once regarded as the peculiar and private business of adult men and women. There is no real inconsistency in their attitude. Complete freedom to pursue their pleasures and whims they call liberty. Submission to regimentation and paternalism they call acceptance of the people's will. But there is one name for both, and that name is irresponsibility. All interference that makes life easier and softer is accepted. Interference that imposes duties and makes life more uncomfortable is resented. A man may be compelled to insure, but he is not compelled to undergo vaccination. The one is paternal protection and is accepted meekly. The other is an inconvenience and so is not enforced.

Under planning, governmental interference is bound to become uncomfortable. If the social philosophy that has roots both in the Rights of Man and the Communist Manifesto has not yet caused widespread trouble, the reason is that, in peace-time, the spread of socialism had not seriously infringed the liberties which people had remembered to value. When valued liberties were, occasionally, touched, trouble followed at once. Attempts to shepherd some of the unemployed into reconditioning camps brought out a sudden and portentous yell of rage and warning. Transfer of population was not even attempted.

But compulsory training and compulsory transfer are



essential features of the war plan,<sup>1</sup> which we are asked to take as a model and an inspiration for peace. The trade unions have a promise that their rights will be restored shortly after the war, and, although progressives take it for granted that the old position of property will never be restored, the propertied interests have another point of view. It is very much in question whether any personal and corporate rights can be restored, or, at least, retained under a central plan. 'Freedom from want' means guaranteed work, but it would be a bold visionary who imagined that the State could guarantee to each man the work he would choose to do, or guarantee to keep him in idleness if he refused the work the State was able to offer. It is also a question how far the statistical gentlemen who imagine they make plans can allow for an incalculable factor like the right to strike.

The people have put up with forms, restrictions, permits, schedules and general ordering about of the petty *fonctionnaires* of a harassed bureaucracy through a strong impulse of patriotism. Planners, being mostly of clerkly habit, seem to be very indifferent to the dumb misery and exasperation of millions of the poor, afflicted with complicated and incomprehensible forms. There are many very decent, hard-working people who would cheerfully bear the meagreness of rations if they did not have to contend with the wealth of ration books and cards.

They have accepted temporary restrictions on their liberties because they want to save and increase their liberties. Are they willing to accept permanent restrictions for quite another purpose? Hardship as the price of future victory is a reasonable decision. Hardship as the price of future plenty is not. Doing without saucepans to have more Spitfires in the following year is obvious good sense. Doing without saucepans to have more saucepans in ten years is quite another matter.

If the people do not make the sacrifices willingly, the plan will see that they make them, somehow. Authority must intervene in many ways. The crucial decisions of priority and disposition of resources will not be reached with wisdom and foresight under compromise planning. Our plan may begin democratically, but it will not continue that way. A planned economy may be inefficient, wasteful, and as slow in movement as a glacier and yet be tolerated; but it simply must not be allowed to break down. The politicians who initiate a co-ordinated plan may be flung out

<sup>1</sup> And of the Beveridge Plan.

of office, but their successors will find that they cannot drop the baby. What the plan demands will have to be done. If it demands increasing interference and restriction, then increasing interference and restriction we will have. Local interests, sectional interests, individual rights and liberties may, up to a safe point, interfere with the plan. When the interference threatens to wreck the plan, it will be crushed, by the unlimited authority of high necessity. It will be pointless to complain or ask questions in the House. 'In the name of the Cardinal and for the good of the State, the bearer of this has done what he has done.'

It will be found that the less politicians have to do with the plan, the better it will work. It will then be found that the personnel and methods of the orthodox Civil Service are also rather a nuisance. The men who can really work the thing will assume power and, with power, privilege. It has been pointed out with much justice that the real significance of Stalin's purges was not that he was able to shoot managers, but that he had to put other managers in the places of the deceased. Under a stern autocracy, an important manager leads the life of pride and peril that was led by a feudal baron under a strong king. Under a liberal democracy he is more likely to lead the life of a baron under a weak and unstable regency.

Once the plan is clamped on us and the services of the managers become obviously essential, it will take very little to make them the richest men in the country. All the men in Britain who are now earning a tax-free income of six thousand a year could be packed into one bus. An important planner would feel ashamed of himself if he could not plan a salary plus untaxed expenses and various comforts in kind, amounting in total value to six thousand a year. He can make his little financial arrangements with a good conscience. After all, is he not the most necessary servant of the Master Plan? But his income will be the least of it. It is not personal ownership which will attract him, but control, and he will have plenty of that.

The elementary facts about planning should be squarely and long considered. Planning is not automatic. It demands planners, and successful planners are men with very unusual qualities. Further, planning is not magic. If we are lucky enough to discover men of profound sagacity, commanding will and versatile attainment, no extraordinary results need be expected. Organization may, or it may not, work wonders, and

science may come to the rescue with other wonders; but first-class miracles need not be expected. Flowers are not yet grown on top of Ben Nevis and, whatever the future may hold, it will take more than a packet of seeds to realize that dream. A planned and scientific direction will call for great and sustained effort, much abstinence and much regimentation, for a comparatively modest and uncertain result.

This is not so attractive a picture as is drawn by the World-of-Plenty propagandists, but it is a good deal nearer the truth. If the people are persuaded that there is a broad and easy road to an earthly paradise, disillusionment will inevitably come; but it will come too late. The people, if they think about the matter, must be rather puzzled by the popular propaganda which assails them. They are assured, on the one hand, that only a few out-of-date notions and obsolete persons stand in the way of prosperity for all, and they are exhorted, on the other, to deeds of revolutionary energy and determination, as if there were mighty and uncertain tasks ahead.

If past experience is any guide, they are not likely to be greatly moved by the exhortations. When the war is over people will want to stretch their legs and go to the movies. They will not be inclined to celebrate release from one heavy burden by taking on another. Soldiers who have had enough of military discipline and civilians who have had enough of bureaucratic regimentation will not welcome a controlled and elaborately organized life. They will not dance the Carmagnole for more forms, more orders and more restrictions.

A more effective, but less stimulating appeal is the inevitability of planning. It may be argued that a community devoted to the largest possible production of goods, regardless of other ends, has no escape from regimentation. If that argument carries conviction, it will be a depressing conviction. Mr. Priestley will continue to object to mass production, but he will have to bow to the inevitable. The simple man may resent being pushed about, but the weight of economic tendencies will continue to push him.

In the heart of planners there is an overwhelming respect for economic law. In this they are fully in accord with the old Manchester school. Both the older and the newer theories accept the doctrine that unjustifiable loss is caused by interference with economic trends. One teaches that economic forces can only exercise their beneficent effect when the State stands out; the

other that economic forces can only work freely when the State steps in. They both believe that economic forces must be freed, and then obeyed.

It is possible that the gross and inevitable interference with our private affairs may not cause much pain, if the anæsthesia of our free instincts continues to spread. But it will be hard to pretend that freedom has survived. It may be accepted that a nation which makes a plenitude of material goods its basic principle of social action must accept the consequences that follow from the application of that principle, and politics may cease to have any moral meaning.

Conservatives may exploit the leader principle to their personal advantage, but to the death of any traditions for which they have claimed to stand, and the Labour Party may welcome the advent of Socialism and profess to be content. But, if it does, it will have to forget its own birth and boyhood. The Labour Party drew much of its original fervour from insistence on the right of every man to hold his head high and to reject the patronage of insolent wealth. It instructed Lady Bountifuls in the private rights of man. It was proud to regard Cobbett as an exemplar in the calm and confident assertion of human dignity and independence. It held up the Rochdale pioneers as teachers of self-help, and properly honoured the early trade unionists as men who asserted human rights against the State. There is no room for such men in a planned and mechanical society. The human birthright will have been sold for a mess of pottage. The people have waited a long time for the red dawn. When it comes, they may not be inclined to cheer. It will not be warming or inspiriting, and the air will not be fresh.

The dawn is overcast, the morning lowers,  
And heavily in clouds brings in the day.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### CHARITY

**E**NTHUSIASTS are not satisfied with arguing that domestic planning is inevitable. They insist that planning must be conducted on a world-scale if it is to be satisfactory and secure, and they claim that all modern developments are



thrusting irresistibly in that direction. It is remarkable how much moral zeal and crusading fervour can be employed to advance what is regarded as being mechanically inevitable. It is even more remarkable how often the crusading zeal runs counter to the inevitable process, without the crusaders being aware of the fact.

Sir Richard Acland said: 'Of course, economic forces are even more powerful than moral—and in the long run—maybe the very long run—they will prevail.' (*Unser Kampf*, p. 31.) He said also: 'To-day the world is relentlessly driven to more and ever more complete monopoly control. Every private interest seeks a monopoly position. Governments support the process. War drives it farther and faster. And nothing on earth that anyone can do will ever put it into reverse.' (*Unser Kampf*, p. 45.)

But, on page 35 of the same little book, he blamed the Church for standing aside from the economic process and bowing to the apparently inevitable. "What would have happened if every pulpit in the land had thundered against the factory conditions of the early industrial revolution? 'We care not one jot or tittle for your iron laws of economics. We care nothing about the alleged financial ruin of the country. These are not our concern.'" (*Unser Kampf*, p. 35.) In a footnote Sir Richard agrees that the pulpit thunders might well be continued at the present day.

The iron laws of economics are to be despised if they tell against Sir Richard's social views. They are to be revered as inevitable if they tell in favour of these views.

There is, in fact, a good deal of hocus-pocus about irresistible economic forces and iron economic laws. Economic laws are of two kinds. There are laws based on observation of the physical world, and there are laws based on the observation of human conduct. To say that an oil well, or a coal mine, when once exhausted, can never be replenished is a statement in one order. To say that 'a bold peasantry, their country's pride, when once destroyed can never be supplied,' is a statement in quite another. Laws deduced from the behaviour of the physical world, and laws deduced from the behaviour of human beings, are not only of different kinds, but they may clash in practice. The American Dust Bowl provided a dramatic object-lesson in diminishing returns; but the economic trends which led to that uneconomic catastrophe and vain defiance of the iron law were trends of precisely the same kind as are now called irresistible when they

work in favour of Socialism. The tendency to secure the largest production at the lowest cost, without much regard to other considerations, will be irresistible, so long as men choose not to resist it; but not longer.

Complete submission to the economic argument gives an insecure basis for the conduct of the war and the settlement of the future peace. Most of us now believe that the German wars have not been fought principally for markets or raw materials, but for the satisfaction of German pride and other dark and strange emotions. It took the present war to win converts, even temporary converts, to this view. Indeed, nothing so clearly illustrates the departmentalization of modern thinking than the unwillingness of many who eagerly accept the findings of psychoanalysis to apply those findings to modify the crudity of their materialistic interpretation of international relations. Many progressives still believe that the *root* causes of German aggression lie in economic maladjustment, i.e. not in Germany or in the Germans. Hot anger, the natural response of decent men to evil things, conceals that belief for the time being; but it is very likely to revive. No doubt in some it has been killed, but in others it has only been scotched, and in a strong minority it is vigorously alive. It is a belief that weakens the sense of moral reprobation and encourages the suspicion that Germany may have got hold of the right end of the economic stick. The German character is in the dock before the conscience of the world, and there are few ready to accept a plea of 'Not Guilty'; but there are many who are ready to concede that the bad behaviour of the accused is largely the result of his terrible environment and upbringing, that he is really a victim of society, and that his crimes, black and cruel though they be, may yet indicate the way to a better order.

Jurors who think in this way show a debilitating anxiety to convince themselves that they have a right to be in the jury box, and to convince the accused that he ought to be in the dock. Mr. Howard Smith, who wrote *Last Train from Berlin*, made the following suggestion in that book: 'If I may suggest specific details of a plan to knock the Nazis lopsided without firing a single bullet more than we would ordinarily fire—why not nationalize those Welsh mines we promised to nationalize during the last war, but never nationalized? Why not do it to-morrow morning? The mere publication of the fact would kill more

Nazis than a thousand bombs on Germany. You, who have not been in Germany and forced to read reams of Nazi propaganda every day, have no idea how often the Nazis have used those mines to show how few real ideas England possesses for a better world.' A thousand bombs, even a hundred thousand bombs, have not done a great deal in the way of killing Nazis. What else must we nationalize to bring up the total of ideological casualties? What other steps must we take to convince the Germans that we are not being merely impertinent in fighting them? It may be argued that nationalizing the Welsh mines would be a sound measure to win the confidence of the Welsh miners; but to argue that it would shake the nation that suffered the Russian winter and captured Crete like locusts is not to argue like a reasonable being. One Smith said that the disestablishment of the Welsh Church would shock the conscience of every Christian community in Europe. Another Smith now says that to nationalize the Welsh mines will touch the pagan heart of Germany. 'Chuck it, Smith!'

Persons who think like that suffer from a patent and painful inferiority complex towards the enemy. There must have been many like them in the countries now occupied, and it is not likely that they have found much heart to offer resistance to the occupation. That fierce and final test has fortunately not come to us, but victory will bring a test less crude but as searching. If you believe that you can cast out devils by nationalization, defeated Germany will give you every encouragement in your delusion. It will be manifestly unfair to show a coarse suspicion and exercise a harsh restraint with a people who offer infallible economic guarantees that they will sin no more. The Germans, indeed, may show a highly intelligent zeal in economic reconstruction, and some of the nations we are pledged to rescue, our official allies, may show up very badly in comparison. 'We understand organization,' said Hitler. A new planning order may not strike the Germans as being so startlingly new. There will be no lack of collaborators among the defeated.

In fact, there is no possibility that the reconstruction of Europe will be conditioned by a respectful study of economic trends. It was not economic but uneconomic political forces which kept Germany from being the master of Europe in peacetime. The undeniable energy and talent of her citizens, their instinct for organization and their formidable inheritance of industrial skill gave her a tremendous economic advantage. If



the Federal Union of Europe were ever achieved, the capital would be Berlin, and great stretches of Europe would be reduced from economic hardship to a more or less comfortable servitude.

No planner can regard the Polish Corridor with favour and the moral of *Kameradschaft* will not be lost on those who wish to rationalize the German and French coal and iron industries. If there is an irresistible tendency for Europe to become one economic unit, that unit will be German. There is talk of creating a counterbalance to the weight of German pressure in South-Eastern Europe. But that can only be done by creating and nursing industries, and protecting them in a highly unscientific way from the overwhelming force of German competition. It means making a peace 'that cannot last.' It means sowing dragon's teeth again—if we accept the sacredness of economic tendencies. In spite of that, there are few who would willingly give Germany free rein to win the victories of Peace, no less renowned and much more certain than the victories of War; but there are many who are fascinated by large-scale organization, efficiency and a plenitude of material goods and who will find it hard to go strongly against the economic grain. These may very well be strong enough to play a large part in arranging a compromise peace, as fatally inconsistent as the Treaty of Versailles.

In Occupied Europe there is the wreckage of the pre-war autarchical systems on which has been imposed the unitarian German order. What the liberated peoples will wish to salvage from the old system and the new is a problem which will take much tact and understanding to solve. To talk glibly now about the reconstruction of Europe is criminally foolish. The peoples of Europe are undergoing almost unimaginable experiences. German strength, their own weakness, the exposure of treachery and the imposition of new social arrangements must have worked deeply into the mind. Settling Europe hopefully demands much more than a selection of bigotries and large supplies of food; it demands something like a spiritual exercise, an attempt to imagine what it must feel like to discover that the whole framework of your life has snapped like a broken stick, and to endure the evil and soul-destroying effects of that discovery for miserable years.

There is not much indication that this most urgent problem is engaging public attention. There is a good deal of talk as to how the peace may be made acceptable to Germany, but very little as to the much more subtle problem of making it acceptable



to the nations which have suffered complete defeat and have been rescued to victory. It is no insult to the exiled Governments to say that their advice on this matter must be lacking in the fullness and certainty of knowledge. These Governments have lived on the side of victory all through the war, and their peoples have lived on the side of defeat. The exiles and ourselves resemble public-spirited persons who have laboured hard and long in the interests of some man who has been unjustly imprisoned. There can be no denying our zeal, our pure intentions and our generous sympathies; but when the man at last comes out of jail, there can equally be no denying that he is not the man who went in. He is changed, as we are not changed. We have not shared his experience. We cannot fully understand it; he cannot fully explain it.

The bitterness of European feeling against Germany may well be surmised, but the mind is not merely a receptacle for anger. When Germany has been finally crushed, we will see this strange thing that nearly all the nations of Europe will have been defeated, and all the nations will be dominated by Allied arms. That Poland will sit as one of the victorious nations at the Peace Conference is unquestionable; but that will not make Poland a victorious nation. Her status will be morally as strong and factually as weak as the present status of the Polish Embassies in London and Washington. She is likely to be represented at the Conference by men who have most gallantly shared hard experiences, but not, on the whole, Polish experiences. The same is true of all the other conquered countries. Their representatives will have deserved well of their peoples, but they will return, like the Bourbons, as strangers.

Those Russians who have suffered the full ferocity of German occupation will find it difficult to regard the Germans as victims of the dialectic or to accept a social revolution in Germany as a final guarantee of a change of heart and a complete exculpation. Indeed, the Russians who have not been enslaved may be no more willing to offer up their revenge on the shrine of ideology. The exercise of their fierce energy, their astonishing endurance and their grim privations can hardly fail to mark the Russian mind and work havoc with text-book Communism. How far the Tibetan isolation of Russian life can survive the war is an important question. It may be that Russia will emerge from this war as France emerged from the last, unconquered, but

deeply wounded, having defied the enemy to break her, but having found herself unable to break the enemy. If she has the same experience, she may develop the same mentality, and that is one which the promoters of international brotherhood found difficulty in dealing with.

The future position of France is even more interesting and obscure. French prestige has been enormously reduced by the collapse of the army and the surrender of the Government. Her way of recovery is not clear, but it is quite possible that she may achieve a large and awkward influence by assuming the leadership of the unfortunate in Europe. Because of the armistice and because of Vichy she will be more dubiously placed than the countries which continued the fight, but it will not be possible to refuse consideration to the weight of her civilization and tradition. She will not readily accept benevolent interference. 'France must save herself' is continually said by people who mean that France, now and hereafter, must do what she is told.

There is a strong tendency to adopt an attitude of firm kindness towards France, to stand no conservative or other nonsense and to make her future independence conditional on her readiness to be dependent. The genuinely victorious nations who hold all the keys of power will be tempted more than they will realize to use their power, without a very sensitive regard to the moral claims of the Allied nations which will be as weak as Germany herself. The danger point will not be reached with the cessation of hostilities, for problems of starvation, disease and the restoration of even a local authority may occupy all energies and demand a general consent. During that period the conquering nations may occupy a position analogous to that held by a doctor dealing with a very sick patient. When some kind of order and independent economic life has been restored, the crisis will come. The patient will feel well in body, while the doctor, if progressive ideas are dominant, will think he is still very sick in mind.

Unless the situation is handled with real knowledge and imagination there will be domineering patronage to resent on the one hand, and 'ingratitude' on the other. The peoples of Britain and the States may well feel that their Governments have been more than generous to France in restoring her possessions, while the French may feel that they have been less than just. France lost more than a battle, a campaign and a war in 1940; France had her history cancelled. Her material position may still be

better than that of Poland or of Greece, but her spiritual state must be infinitely more depressing. The smaller countries can blame Germany for everything with honest bitterness, but France cannot. France had taken a leading part in international affairs, and, whatever mistakes she may have made in the conduct of those affairs, the French must surely feel that the fundamental mistake was in assuming leadership, and its responsibilities, without the necessary strength, purpose or unity. Ruined, as she must feel, by external adventures, will she be in the mood for further experiments of the same kind?

Will the mind of France turn outwards or inwards? It seems wise to allow for the probability that it will turn inwards, that the French will seek a long period of semi-seclusion to restore their own health and bring back confident life to their own nation. The last war produced an inflamed nationalism in Europe. Some think that this war will begin the downfall of the nation. Mr. Borkenau has pointed out, truly enough, that Hitler's most staggering triumphs were largely achieved through his acute insight, which enabled him to gauge the weakening of national feeling in the countries he attacked. But Mr. Borkenau has omitted to notice that the countries which were weak in national sense were weak in every other way, that the nation had not decayed to yield place to something larger and more vigorous, but had simply decayed. Strength still goes with national consciousness, and it is more than probable that the weakened nations will attempt to renew their strength from the source which supplied it in the past, and will avoid the source of their sufferings and humiliations.

That is not to say that they will avoid all international relationships, but the period of great rashness in foreign commitments is likely to be followed by a period of extreme caution. Nations will want to be very sure that for any guarantee asked from them something very solid will be given in exchange. Poland had formidable guarantees, but Poland died alone. France gave formidable guarantees, but found that she could not guarantee her own frontiers. Such experiences bite deep, and the neatest and most plausible thesis will not efface the impression made by facts. It will be vain to assure the Greeks, for example, that Hitler would never have threatened the world if a firm stand had been made for Manchuria, or if Mussolini had been promptly rapped over the knuckles for Corfu. (Why, by the way, has



Chanak been forgotten in the list of lost opportunities?) We must not expect the stricken nations to rush to arms if aggression rears its ugly head in Terra Del Fuego. No doubt they will be ready to accept military and economic collaboration which has an obvious and immediate purpose and point in keeping Germany overawed; but beyond that they will probably show a great lack of enthusiasm. What limited form of collaboration they will be ready to adopt it is quite impossible to say, as also what forms of governments they will adopt: but there can be hardly any doubt that the limits will be severe.

It is not surprising that it should be so. If a man is persuaded, half-unwillingly, to attempt some difficult and dangerous gymnastic trick, he is very likely to fail. If he does fail, and hurts himself severely, the enthusiast may extract some comfort from telling him that all would have gone well if he had kept his nerve and done exactly what he was advised. The enthusiast might add that he could still do it well if he was cool and prompt: but, in fact, the injured man will not be persuaded to try again. If his nerve was insufficient before he was hurt, it will be more insufficient after.

We should now have learned that a half-hearted or merely formal acceptance of international responsibilities is a great deal worse than nothing, and we should understand that any pressure, direct or indirect, will produce either a formal and disastrous acquiescence or, more probably, friction between the allies. If the European allies feel they are being hustled they will be resentful, and it is then that France may turn awkward. France cannot, in our time, be steadily considered as a minor power. She can speak with all the splendours of her past and with the living force of her intellectual eminence. She will consult her own instincts in the problems of her own revival, and if these instincts lead her to a view of life profoundly different from that held by eager ideologues in London and Washington, it will be well to accept the situation, for she will speak for more than herself.

The alliance will not long outlast benevolent interference. There is something ominous in the way certain American theorists (but not the very sensible State Department) are making ingenious and progressive disposal of the Dutch Empire, as if Holland had forfeited her right to her Empire by suffering conquest at the hands of the common foe. It is not suggested that the victors will fail to restore the Dutch Empire, but that the



restoration (and even more, the restoration of the French Empire) will cause irritation and disappointment among the apostles of Federal Union and those who think on those lines..

Large talk about creating a new world ignores the fact that we are to a considerable extent committed to the restoration of the old. We will set about the next peace settlement with liabilities as large and as incongruous as those which crippled us in the last. Even more than most alliances, the present grand combination against Germany is a matter of accident, in so far as it was brought about by the action of the enemy. All the nations, with the exception of Britain and France, were more or less thrust into the war, and misfortune has not ceased to make strange bedfellows. If the peace-time conduct of the firm is to be dominated by the ideas of those who happen to have all the assets at the end of the war, the firm will not last long.

Our aims will, of course, be noble. We will seek to bring prosperity and peace to Europe, but prosperity and peace were not born twins. Maximum prosperity means maximum economic exploitation, and that means the economic dominance of Germany. Every year it becomes easier to translate economic dominance into military superiority. If Europe consented to a planned pooling of resources and an interlocking of industry, it would hardly be necessary for Germany to make any military effort at all to assert her will in Europe.

A political re-settlement of Europe, with peace as a first consideration, will distort and cut across the pure lines of economic planning. To maintain such a settlement, with the economic oddities so distressing to the tidy mind, will be distasteful for the planners. They will find that in all large schemes of integration and collaboration the Germans will lend enthusiastic skilful assistance, while the former allies will be suspicious and reactionary. If we have compromise planning we may have political arrangements interfering with economic arrangements not sufficiently to give a reasonable guarantee of peace, but sufficiently to give a large impression of lost opportunities in material welfare.

The Germans may have had enough of warfare by the end of their present adventure. The world will not easily be convinced that that is so, but the thing is not impossible. If the Germans consider war as diplomacy conducted by other means, and they find the other means disastrous to themselves, they may be willing to try a more reliable extension of diplomacy. If men

were, in fact, moved to war entirely by motives of material satisfaction, that development might be regarded as inevitable, sooner rather than later. That it is not generally accepted as being inevitable is evidence that faith in the simple Marxian analysis has been badly shaken. Yet the possibility of a German economic conquest will stir fear and opposition among Germany's neighbours, nearly as great as the possibility of military conquest. Projects to counterbalance Germany's economic strength will be opposed by those who put wealth and comfort first. The advisability of waiting to discover the mind of Europe is not much considered in enthusiastic circles. There is a tendency to treat countries which are materially weak and broken as if they were necessarily weak in the mind and broken in spirit. It is a dangerous tendency. To make large plans for the restoration of Europe while the war continues is to plan without consideration of the European peoples. Caution and realism will be necessary, and will surely not be altogether lacking. It is not likely that bold and far-reaching schemes will be put into execution, but it is very likely that irritation will be caused in Europe by half-hearted attempts to fulfil the glowing promise, and disappointment in Britain by failure to achieve it; with much room for anger and misunderstanding, on both sides.

The restoration of Europe is a big and delicate enough job, but those who are pressing for a full and clear statement of war aims are not contented with reconstituting Europe according to their notions. The great globe itself is their unit, and 'world-thinking' is their pride. They believe quite honestly that they are the men of the future. Whatever faults they may have, they believe that they, and they alone, are bathed in the light of the morning star; they have grasped the truth that technical advance has made the world one. Believing that your vision is larger and loftier than any other is very sustaining to the spirits, but experience of quite humble affairs teaches us that the large and lofty mind is usually a large and lofty nuisance.

There *are* men of wide-ranging minds, bold and just imagination and eminent capacity for action. But these are the great men of the world, and they are few. Large minds, like large houses, are usually empty. Every little society is sadly familiar with the committee member who despises slavish routine and niggling detail. When faced with small, unpleasant and obstructive facts, he talks rapidly away. He refuses to be bogged in minor matters

or to be worried over trifles, and flatters himself that his invaluable contribution to the society is to keep the great end in view, the end which is in continual danger of being lost in sordid consideration of ways and means. He is the man who is not afraid to 'think big.' He is the organizer of all fiascos and the author of all deficits.

The mind which can steadily and faithfully consider all practical difficulties and yet see its way to a large end is a great mind. The mind which fixes its eye on the summit of a great achievement and ignores the difficulties (or impossibilities) of the necessary road-building is a commonplace mind. There is nothing very striking or very profitable in thinking in world-terms if you allow yourself to invent your own terms.

Most of the 'world-thinking' which is now so popular has no practical meaning at all. 'Freedom from want' is a social ambition which was within sight of achievement in the industrial countries of the Atlantic seaboard before the war, and the want which still obtained in those countries would have looked like luxury in the really destitute parts of the world. That fact was not accepted as ground for complacency, and it was very right to point out the insufficiency of a British working man's wage of three pounds odd a week. But it was foolish to tell him he was a fellow-sufferer with the Indian labourer who might make a few pounds in the course of a year. It is too easy to forget that the Western nations are a small and highly-favoured section of humanity, whose social problems will raise no sympathy among the coolie labour of Shanghai. To raise the Chinese standard of living to the level of Detroit is about as difficult as to raise the bottom of Niagara Falls to the level of the top, and the attempt would rouse no more popular enthusiasm, outside of China.

The wretched conditions of Oriental workers rouse generous pity when they are mentioned in political speeches, but they rouse resentment and alarm when they put the Oriental worker into competition with his white fellows. Oriental poverty is like an Oriental disease. We pity the victim, but we are also afraid of infection.

Fear of infection appears to be particularly strong among the workers. Most industrial countries have had experience of the resentment created by immigrant labour which accepted low wages. Quarrels, social cleavages and restricted immigration are the result. The very genuine American sympathy for China did not lead the Americans to encourage large-scale Chinese immigration. Any scheme of federal union which brought America and



China into the same economic unit would transfer that resentment to the whole Chinese race, and would destroy the existing sympathy for the Chinese who are poor at home.

Racial prejudice is another problem which economic trends may make more acute, but will certainly not abolish. To indulge in it may become disastrously uneconomic under the new dispensation, but that does not mean that it will not be indulged in. Racial hatred and racial pride are horribly ugly things, but they will not be abolished by saying that the white man's material interests are the same as the black's, for they are not; and, in any event, economic interests are not the root of the matter. Equality will only be accepted, if at all, by an insistence on the religious interpretation of life, and that will not be done under centuries.

Enormous differences in the standard of life between countries and continents may have many causes, but no amount of organization will alter the fundamental fact that some countries are thinly populated and naturally rich, while others are thickly populated and naturally poor. A decision to achieve economic equality means, in effect, a decision to transfer some of the wealth of the more fortunate countries to the less fortunate. It may be that the wealthier nations will agree to large transfers (if only for their own indirect benefit); but any alteration of the disproportion which assists the poor but damages themselves will not be accepted. We tried to convince the American people that we would be doing them an economic favour by ceasing to pay our war debt, but we entirely failed to convince.

A pedantic egalitarianism breeds resentment, and resentment does not breed generosity. To assist in raising the material standards of poor countries may be good business in the long run, but if it is undertaken in a strikingly large way it may well appear to be bad business in the short run. It is better to treat such work as an act of intelligent charity and human sympathy, and not to overstrain the charitable instincts of the givers. The methods to be employed raise economic problems, but the act is a moral act. It is not pretended that the social emancipation of the American negro (much less the South African) will be a full reality for very many years. Patient and steady efforts are demanded for disappointingly small results, but more ambitious efforts defeat themselves. What is true on the smaller scale is true on the larger. All social problems are fundamentally problems of character. Planning must start with ourselves.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## JUSTICE

‘Let us begin from God.’—*Novum Organum*.

**I**T is hardly to be doubted that we live in an age of the most critical decisions, that the civilization we enjoy is shaken, unsound and in danger of collapse. There is a general feeling that another great war would finish the business. The nineteenth century interlude begins to loom like the prologue to a very tragic theme. The German revolution and wars of conquest taught those who hugged delusions in the face of plentiful evidence that pride, cruelty and barbarity of thought are not only very powerful still, but can exist along with the most modern technique and the most brilliant handling of the possibilities of the physical sciences. Cruelty has become contemporary.

The shock of this discovery was deep and, like many another shock, it will take years to betray its full effects. It did not at once destroy the modern illusion, but it certainly weakened it, and the collapse of France weakened it still further. For the collapse of France showed not only that the barbaric mind could be very vigorous, but that the civilized mind could be very weak. It may be that a complete military triumph will bring a temporary flush of renewed confidence, but our troubles and disillusionments will not end with victory, however crushing it may be. Then will come a very difficult chance, and perhaps the last chance, of re-establishing the authority of European civilization. To make use of that chance, we will have to think soberly, self-critically and patiently. We will have to accept a number of uncomfortable and generally forgotten truths.

It is platitudinous to say that Man's control over the physical world has far outstripped the development of his control over himself. But many of the moralists who remark on this tragedy appear to find it surprising. They appear to imagine that we can rectify this discrepancy fairly rapidly and by further alterations in the exterior conditions of human life.

But it is the technical advance which is surprising, and not the slow growth of our moral strength, if it grows at all. That there has been, in fact, a fairly rapid and widely extended moral

deterioration, as well as an advance, will not be accepted by those who share the deterioration and approve of it, but it is very evident to others who claim more of the inheritance which is being frittered away.

The nineteenth century saw an alteration in moral emphasis, and that alteration has been taken for general progress. Humanitarian feeling became more powerful and more pervasive. The public conscience refused to accept starvation and extreme want as deplorable accidents. It curbed also the vindictiveness and harsh incidence of the law and severely modified the prerogatives of rank and wealth. These and other fortunate developments took place over a fairly wide area, and it was confidently hoped that they would continue and would extend, in time, to all the world. The cause of savagery appeared to be lost in the street lamp areas. It seemed to be only a matter of time till the progress of engineering and chemistry would abolish lawlessness and tyranny everywhere by the overwhelming force of physical developments. But it was not machinery which had stimulated reform. It was moral zeal, drawing its force, directly or indirectly, from religion, and the religious impulse began to weaken. Many ceased to profess religion and a large party of those who still professed it were unconfident and confused. The confusion was paralleled among secularists; for their moral zeal was accompanied by a denial of moral responsibility. The civilization which survived the strain of the first world-war was confused in its own first principles; in many places it snapped under the strain of the second. Our ways of thinking had become soft.

This life is not easy. Its problems do not permit of a comfortable, rapid and entirely agreeable solution. That is one point on which it should now be possible to win the agreement of all sensible people. The contrary delusion was a by-product of comfort and security. The notion that there is a simple device for the painless solution of great problems is one that could have flourished only in a civilization which had its thought formed largely by persons who were themselves secure from the harsh impact of ordinary life. That is where the clerks have done much harm to their followers. Their lives, for the most part, are comfortable and secure. They are able to follow their natural bent. They work with pen, paper and abstractions. They do not experience the stubbornness of the earth at all, and they experience very slightly the stubbornness of natural man.

The clerkly class is not a new class. It has a long and glorious history behind it. But it is only in modern times that the class, as a class, became secluded and secure. The common mischances of ordinary life, plague, turmoil and evil weather afflicted the earlier clerks as much as they afflicted other people, and the gallows threatened them rather more than most, when they tried their hand at government. Their daily bread was often a matter for anxiety. The perils and hardships of life taught them to think with modesty and caution. In addition, they were subject to the authority of the ruling social system and religion. To rebel was to take a great risk, and men do not take great risks frivolously.

The clerks have benefited more than any other class from modern civilization. The material rewards which come easily to them are as much as they seriously want. They are free to exercise extreme intellectual irresponsibility, and the public prestige of their special talents is very great. Life is easy for them, and they teach that it could and should be easy for everybody.

It has always been the progressive's weakness to under-rate or ignore difficulties in the way of what is considered to be advance, and, what is worse, to forget the necessity of continual work and watching to maintain what has already been won. He allows little, if anything, for the variety, fallibility and stubbornness of human nature. Farmers and housewives are not at all likely to be progressive. Weeding and dish-washing are exercises which teach them the unceasing necessity and the supreme importance of conservation. The progressive lightly assumes that only a dramatic accident will rob us of what we have gained. Again, analogy from the sciences misleads him. An advance in scientific knowledge, once made, will not be easily lost; it becomes the starting-point for a new advance. But the law of human gravity is downwards. It takes constant and patient effort to hold what we have. That is a sobering lesson which must be re-learned.

Because plans and schemes are easy to sketch, progressive ambitions are much too sweeping. Even in matters of material improvement, we are badly in need of a sad sense of necessary limitations. To suggest that our social objectives should be limited is not to counsel timidity. It will take all the energy and boldness we possess to fulfil a quite modest programme. We will meet with nothing but confusion and disappointment if we take the rehousing of the poor as a great objective and then add to



it a dozen other objectives, some of them contradictory and all absorbing energy and resources which will be fully needed for the one.

It is necessary to return to a sense of duty and personal responsibility. These are moral qualities which are weakening and must be strengthened. It is necessary to recapture pride and honour in ordinary toil and in the worth of ordinary men. A miner is not merely a wage-slave, or a discontented subject or a victim of society. He is a man who makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the national character. If he feels a stranger in the fold he must be brought back into full communion. He will not be brought back by a thoughtless propaganda of rancour.

If parliamentary democracy is to survive, not merely as a convenient device, but as a living communion, something must be done to secure the partnership of the millions who regard its workings with blank and uninterested eyes. Social changes must be considered in that light. They will prove very expensive if they increase the indifference or dumb hostility with which so many regard the soulless workings of the machine. Our political system is out of vital touch with great masses, and our trade union system is in not much better case. Its importance to the ordinary worker diminishes every day, and adventures in international politics will not restore the fading life. To give the unions some greater and more fruitful reality, to strengthen the simple man's pride and sense of partnership is a problem that is hardly understood by those who think that the working man feels free if he has the choice of deciding between two candidates who are each determined to order himself and his family about in a highly benevolent and scientific manner.

The modern man simply must make up his mind whether he loves liberty or comfort most. He must have priority among his aims ; for, if he continues to nourish contradictory ambitions, he will suffer for it. A vigorous life among the trade unions, drawing its strength from the ordinary member, is a life in potential opposition to the planning bureaucracy. The right to exercise a serious franchise is a right to make major decisions and to reject the findings and authority of the governing experts. Complete liberty of expression is meaningless if it is tied to complete subjection to authority in the most important personal affairs. The right to hold religious beliefs is of minor value if the State denies



the right to teach them in schools and denies the right to practise many of them in everyday life.

The clerk has a special duty to scale his ideas and settle contradictions among them, but he is particularly averse to this painful exercise because he is quite unwilling to recognize how much he is moved by sentiments and sentimentalities. Anxious to impose the most neatly organized plans on our exterior lives, he shies away from the suggestion that he should plan his own ideas. Order in the mind is a first necessity. Without it, a planned society is like a well-run excursion taking a large number of bored and quarrelsome passengers in the wrong direction.

We must have stable standards of conduct, and accept their implications, however unpleasant they may be. It is a crime to excuse evil deeds because you approve of the political or social ideas of their perpetrators.<sup>1</sup> If we 'confess the sins of the age to be our own,' we will have to admit that there are not many of us who have not that lesson to learn. We must not cry out upon the slaughters committed by our enemies and white the sepulchres where our imagined friends have laid their victims. We must not say that the employment of young children in factories is a grim and gallant gesture abroad and a piece of reactionary slave-driving at home. We must not seek to show Congress that we mean to honour the commitments we have offered to accept by dishonouring the commitments we already have with the native Indian States.<sup>2</sup> We can only preserve what morality we have remaining by accepting its discipline and rebuke.

Keeping a single standard of morality, we must keep a single standard of evidence. What is sufficient proof of what we are anxious to believe is also sufficient proof of what we want not to believe. Facts must be looked straight in the face, not with a drooping and an auspicious eye. There is a natural tendency to

<sup>1</sup> The comment of *The Tribune* on the murder of Darlan set up a new world's record in fatuous venom. The news was so delightful, said *The Tribune*, that if the bells had not already been ringing for Christmas, there would have been 'a spontaneous, and unprecedented movement towards the churches.' *The Tribune* said, further, that public rejoicing would 'hardly have been less' if Darlan had died from natural causes. 'It was good to get him out of the way whatever the means.' Then *The Tribune* complained that the murderer was executed by lynch law—that no time was given for the normal course of law, Marat walks the earth again.

<sup>2</sup> That is not to say that the post-Mutiny deal is immortally valid, but that we must not choose to assume it is entirely obsolete without honest examination.

regard evidence of popular discontent in Germany with a considerable degree of credulity, and equally strong (or weak) evidence of collaboration in France or Czechoslovakia with hostile distrust. It is a tendency which will have ample rein in the years of reconstruction. We will suffer if we do not check it. It is pure nonsense to say that strict censorship had one effect on French morale, and quite another on Russian. These things are not, of course, said together. But an honest man must bring his conclusions together and discard what he cannot honestly retain.

He must never let sentiment obscure fact. He may consider that nationalism is a very cramping framework for a man who can read several languages and fly round the world. He may think that development of transport ought to have abolished nationalism. But he cannot afford to deny that nationalism has positively intensified with development of transport, that it remains a solid thing and a source of strength, and that internationalism has invariably been a source of weakness and usually a symptom of decay. If such hard facts fly in the face of political theories and economic tendencies, so much the worse for the theories and tendencies. It is not enough to acknowledge unpleasant facts unwillingly and then belittle them. Every fact must be honestly given its due weight and proportion. We must not merely accept difficulties when they are obvious. We must seek them out, for our own protection, before they find us out.

If people thought more rigorously and honestly, they would write and talk a great deal less; which would be an advantage in itself. They would not talk nonsense about the democratic career of Rommel, just because it suited their prejudices to believe such nonsense. They would not say that children must be sent to nursery schools because most women are not competent to rear their own children, and then fail to ask themselves where we will find the women who are competent to rear other people's children, when so few are competent to rear their own. They would not be so sure as Mr. Dalton is that planned abundance is 'easily attainable' in peace-time. Still less would they accept his assumption that planned abundance will assist mental and spiritual renewal.

That last fallacy is illimitably dangerous. The vague idealisms of the earlier revolutionary movements were at least not so vulgar as to hold that the soul drew its strength and nourished its growth

on ample supplies of bread. Food, clothing and pensions are quite simply irrelevant to spiritual renewal.

But obsession with material things may be damaging to our very survival. We are creating a moral atmosphere in which it is thought wrong for a child to be afflicted with life, unless it can be guaranteed untroubled comfort from the cradle to the grave. It is not in this spirit that human society has ever grown. If we yield to it, we will also yield power, authority and, in the end, our comfort itself, to the nations who are not afraid of the necessary hardships and the great risks of an enterprising and confident life.

There are some things that the most elaborate planning cannot insure against. We cannot insure against the penalties which follow confused thought and feeling. We cannot insure against the meagreness of spirit which follows neglect of religion, or against that contempt for Man which follows on failure to honour God. The conquest of Nature may give us even more startling powers than we now enjoy; but they will be auxiliary powers. They will not give us the energy to live, the patience to endure or the capacity to enjoy.

These are secret powers we must re-discover for, and within, ourselves. If we fail to do so, our civilization will either collapse in blood and ruin, or else quite simply cease to breathe, like the distinguished old Frenchman who said quietly that he was tired of living and ceased to live. It will be a nice irony if Western civilization discovers at last that, with many inventions, it has everything to live for, and, at the same time, that it no longer wishes to live. That is what the age of Reason is bringing us to, and there will be no escape from ourselves unless we restore reverence for the mystery of the soul and respect for the natural dignity of the whole man. If secularists think they can restore these essentials by any other means than religion, we would like to watch them try. On second thoughts, we would not. We have watched them trying for the past hundred and fifty years. For all that time Man has attempted

‘ to hear

His hopes ’bove wisdom, grace and fear.’

We have followed the bright rainbow of humanistic promise, too zealously and too long. It still hangs in the sky, but its colours have faded; and the floods are still rising about us.







